Qasīda-khonī
A Musical Expression of Identities in Badakhshan, Tajikistan
Tradition, Continuity, and Change

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Abstract

Abstract (English version)

This dissertation explores *qasīda-khonī*, a musical performance tradition practiced among the Pamirī Ismaili Muslim community living in the mountainous Gorno–Badakhshan province of Tajikistan. In particular, this study analyzes the place *qasīda-khonī* holds for the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims of the GBAO in terms of how it participates in the construction of a distinct geo-cultural identity, and how it is embedded in broader social and cultural contexts and histories.

The GBAO has a cultural milieu determined by significant differences geographically, linguistically, ethnically, spiritually or religiously and, crucial to this study, musically. Music in the GBAO includes several distinctive styles and genres; among the most prevalent are devotional songs performed at different ritualized events. These include all-night gatherings following the death of a community member; Thursday evening and Friday post-prayer meetings; celebrations linked to Nawruz (the traditional New Year); Ramadan; and other religious festivals associated with the Pamirī Ismaili religion and culture. Many, if not most, people in Badakhshan are Shi‘a Ismaili Muslims, and the Ismaili spiritual–devotional tradition has had a strong influence on the Pamirī expressive culture.

This dissertation thus studies *qasīda-khonī* as a distinct musical, cultural practice of Central Asia that has been shaped by history, language, geography, and religion and shows how the musical performance of *qasīda-khonī* helps to fulfill various socially cohesive functions. It is a central phenomenon within religious practice and cultural expression in the area, and, therefore, expresses a special relationship between performance and identity.

Abstract (German version)

Diese Dissertation fokussiert auf die Musik- und Aufführungspraxis *qasīda-khonī* in der Autonomen Provinz Berg-Badachschan (GBAO). Untersucht wird dabei insbesondere der Stellenwert der Musik für die in dieser Region beheimateten Pamirī Ismaili Muslime, ihre historische Einbettung in soziale und kulturelle Kontexte sowie die Rolle von *qasīda-khonī* bei der Schaffung einer distinktiven geo-kulturellen Identität.

Die GBAO, situiert im Hochgebirge Tajikistans, ist durch geographische, linguistische, ethnische, religiös-spirituelle und vor allem auch musikalische Besonderheiten geprägt. Die Musik der GBAO vereint vielfältige Stile und Genres und umfasst insbesondere die Aufführung religiöser Lieder zu verschiedenen ritualisierten Anlässen. *Qasīda-khonī* wird bei nächtlichen Totenwachen, Versammlungen am Donnerstagabend und nach dem Freitagsgebet gespielt und zur traditionellen Neujahrsfeier an Nawruz, im Ramadan und zu anderen religiösen Festen aufgeführt. Die Bevölkerung Badachschans gehört mehrheitlich der islamisch-schiitischen Gemeinschaft der Ismaeliten an, deren religiös-spirituellen Traditionen somit einen großen kulturellen Einfluss auf die Kultur des Pamir ausüben.

Diese Dissertation untersucht die historischen, sprachlichen, geographischen und religiösen Faktoren, die *qasīda-khonī* als kulturelle und musikalische Praxis Zentralasiens prägten und verdeutlicht die soziale Funktion musikalischer Aufführungspraktiken. *Qasīda-khonī*, als zentrales Phänomen religiöser Praktiken und kulturellen Ausdrucks, ist somit auch ein Indikator für die besondere Beziehung von Aufführung und Identität.

Abbreviations

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AKHP	Aga Khan Humanities Project
AKMI	Aga Khan Music Initiative
AKTC	Aga Khan Trust for Culture
BGSMCS	Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies
CAFDP	Central Asian Faculty Development Programme
CHHU	Cultural Heritage Humanities Unit
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
GBAO	Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
IIS	Institute of Ismaili Studies
ITREB	Ismaili Tariqah Religious Education Board
ITREC	Ismaili Tariqah Religious Education Committee
PRDP	Pamir Relief and Development Programme
UCA	University of Central Asia

Notes on Transliteration

I use several Persian and Arabic words in this text. Most of the Persian and Arabic words generally transliterated according to the second edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam. Some Tajik-Persian words transcribed from my interviews and song recordings transliterated concerning their pronunciation in the local dialects. Therefore, I did not use diacritics for the words; instead, I attempted to use the closest approximation following the Tajik orthography. For Cyrillic script languages including Tojikī and Russian, I have utilized the simplified version of the Library of Congress system but omitted the diacritics, except for words with Tajik ӣ written as ī. For instance, instead of *qasida-khoni* and Pamiri, I used *qasida-khonī* and Pamirī. The geographical terms used in their popular Russified forms which are used in English as well (Shughnan, Wakhan instead of Shughnon, Wakhon)

There are also many words used in Pamirī languages. Since there is no standardized transcription system for Pamirī languages, I have attempted the closest approximation following the Tajik orthography.

Notes on the accompanying CD

A compact disk (CD) accompanies this study. I included the CD to provide examples of the varieties of *qasida-khonī* music performed in various contexts. It aims to assist the readers in understanding the materials discussed in this study. The recordings might not be of high quality, but they can convey a better sense of the content presented in this work. The following tracks included on the CD:

Track 01	Azizbeki Khudoyor, performed in Moscow, June 26, 2014, recorded by Muborakqadam Goibnazarov
Track 02	Chorshanbe Alowatov, performed in Dushanbe, Ismaili Centre Dushanbe, September 25, 2011, recorded by Chorshanbe Goibnazarov
Track 03	Akbar Alifbekov and Mamadali Mamadaliev, performed at a funeral ceremony, in Tusyon Village, December 6, 2013, recorded by Donish Doniyorov
Track 04	Aqnazar Alowatov, performed at the celebration of Independence Day of Tajikistan in Dushanbe, September 9, 2011, recorded by Furqat Alifbekov
Track 05	Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov and Aslamkhoni Zaimkhon, performed in Shitkharv Village, November 15, 2011, recorded by Chorshanbe Goibnazarov
Track 06	Akbar Alifbekov, Shohdara Valley, performed during Nawruz Celebration, March 23, Tusyon Village, recorded by Furqat Alifbekov
Track 07	Azizkhoni Mirbozkhon, performed during the celebration of Aga Khan IV's birthday, Vnukut Village, Wakhan, December 14, 2013, recorded by Munavvar Bahriev
Track 08	Pamirī Ismaili Youth Ensemble, performed during the celebration of Aga Khan IV's birthday, Moscow, December 13, 2016, recorded by Muborakqadam Goibnazarov
Track 09	Qodir Lutfishoev, Nawruz Bodurbekov, performed during the celebration of Imamate Day, Ismaili Center Dushanbe, July 11, 2016, recorded by Chorshanbe Goibnazarov
Track 10	Female Group Performance, during the Musical Festival "Andaleb," Dushanbe, August 10, 2014, recorded by Chorshanbe Goibnazarov
Track 11	Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov and Aslamkhoni Zaimkhon, performed at their home, Shitkharv Village, Wakhan, November 17, 2011, recorded by Chorshanbe Goibnazarov

Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation explores *qasīda-khonī*, a musical performance tradition practiced among the Pamirī Ismaili Muslim community living in the mountainous Gorno–Badakhshan province of Tajikistan. The mountainous area of Gorno–Badakhshan, poetically known in Tajik/Persian as *Bom-i Jahon*, the "Roof of the World," forms the eastern part of Tajikistan and has a population of about 214,300 people.[1] The full official name of the province, Gorno–Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (from now on GBAO), was given to the region by the Soviet government in 1925.[2] Although the term Gorno–Badakhshan is a Russian designation, it is still widely used in English-language media. The Tajik name for the region, *Viloyat-i Mukhtor-i Kuhiston-i Badakhshon* (VMKB) (Mountain Autonomous Region of Badakhshan), is primarily used in Tajik-language materials.

The GBAO is situated in the Pamir Mountains in the southeast of Tajikistan and shares a border with Afghanistan in the west and south, with China in the east, and with Kyrgyzstan in the north. The GBAO or VMKB is the only autonomous province of Tajikistan. It has seven official districts: Shughnan, Ishkashim (including Gharan and Wakhan), Roshtqala, Rushan (including Bartang and Khuf), Murghab, Darwaz, and Vanj (which includes Yazgulam). Its capital is Khorog, which located in Shughnan District. Within each district, there are several smaller administrative units.

[1] G.K. Hasanzoda, Sh., Shokirzoda and A.P., Asoev, *Shumora-yi aholi-yi Jumhuri-yi Tojikiston to 1 Yanvar-i sol-i 2015* [Counting of Population of the Republic of Tajikistan until 1st January, 2015], Agenti-yi Omor-i Nazd-i Prezident-i Jumhuri-yi Tojikiston, [Statistic Agency under the President of Republic of Tajikistan], (Dushanbe, 2015):9.

[2] Mastibekov Otambek, "Leadership and Authority in Badakhshan of Tajikistan," PhD dissertation. (University of London, 2009), 84.

Figure 1. **Map of the GBAO region of Tajikistan. It includes all the valleys and villages of the area. Source: http://www.pamirs.org/maps.htm Accessed. 30 January 2017.**

The rugged landscape and the elevation of the Pamir Mountains have prevented constant contact between the Pamirī people and the inhabitants of other regions of Central Asia. This isolation has resulted in the preservation of various local cultural practices and languages, with each area of the Pamirs retaining its languages, aside from Tajik and Russian. Children begin learning Tajik and Russian in school, and thus both languages function as the lingua franca of the region. An example of this cultural isolation is the survival of several Pamirī languages that belong to the Eastern Iranian family of languages.

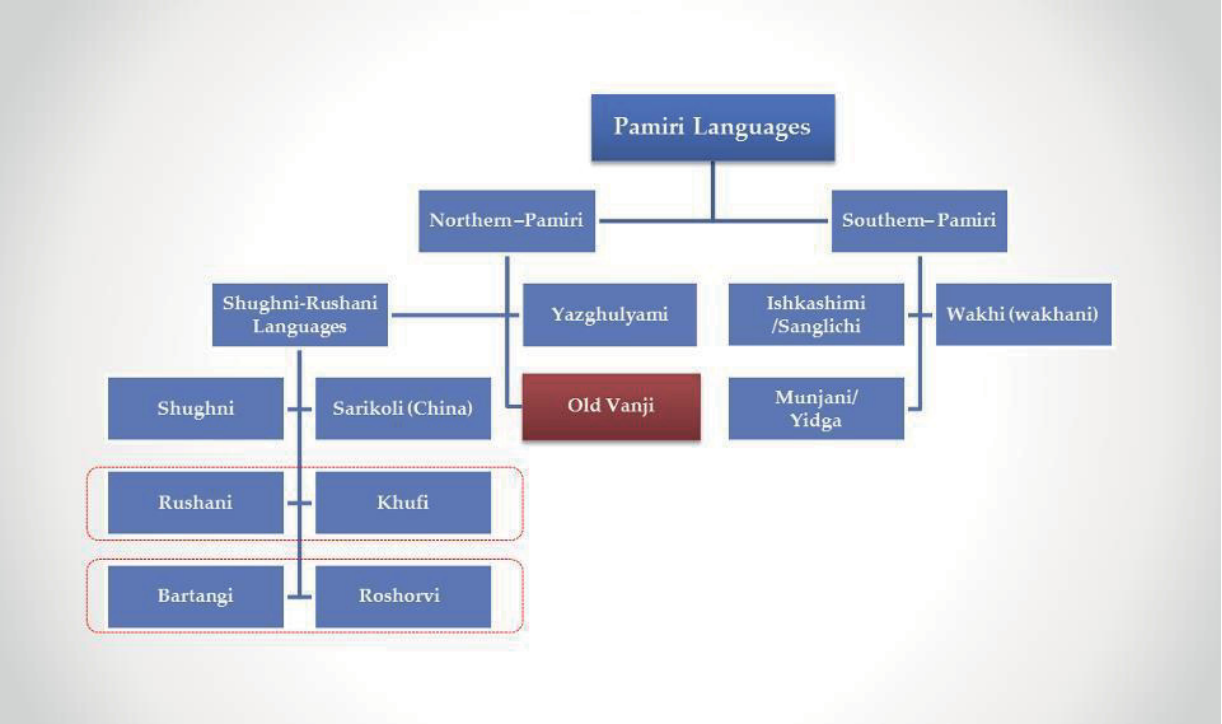

***Figure 2*: The Pamirī languages tree; prepared by Idris Jonmamadov.**

Folk songs composed orally in Pamirī languages such as Shughnanī, Rushanī, Wakhanī, Ishkashimī (it is also called Rynī in GBAO), Bartangī, and Yazgulamī, are commonly heard in the GBAO. More literary compositions set to music in the form of spiritual songs usually written in classical Persian or modern Tajik, which is an eastern dialect of Persian. They are often transmitted orally, too. Many literary texts attributed to great poets like Rumī, Shams-i Tabrezī, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and others are considered "sacred" texts in this region.

The GBAO has a cultural milieu determined by significant differences from the rest of Tajikistan, i.e., geographically (mountains vs. plains), linguistically (the different Pamirī languages vs. Tajik), ethnically (Pamirī vs. Tajik), spiritually or religiously (Shi'a vs. Sunnī),[3] and, crucial to this study,

[3] John Morgan O'Connell, "Sustaining Difference: Theorising Minority Music in Badakhshan," in *Manifold Identities: Studies on Music and Minorities,* ed. Ursula Hemetek, Gerda Lechleitner, Inna Naroditskaya, and Anna Czekanowska (UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2004), 5.

musically (Pamirī music and dance vs. other kinds of Tajik music). Visitors from outside Tajikistan are even required to obtain an additional visa for entering the GBAO. This difference is also expressed in the allocation of a particular timezone to the region called local (*mahallī*) time, as opposed to the state (*dawlatī*) time.

In terms of the musical distinctiveness of the region, music in the GBAO includes several different styles and genres; among the most prevalent are devotional songs performed at various ritualized events. These include all-night gatherings following the death of a community member; Thursday evening and Friday post-prayer meetings; celebrations linked to Nawruz (the traditional New Year); Ramadan; and other religious festivals associated with the Pamirī Ismaili religion and culture. Many, if not most, people in Badakhshan are Shi'a Ismaili Muslims, and the Ismaili spiritual–devotional tradition has had a strong influence on the Pamirī expressive culture.

Communities living in the Pamir Mountains have adhered to the Ismaili offshoot of Islam for about a millennium. Locally, they refer to themselves as the *panj-tanī* (the fivers), i.e., believers in the five Islamic bodies of Muhammad, 'Alī, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. For Pamirī communities, the *panj-tan*s are of great importance in everyday life. For example, in traditional houses in Badakhshan five pillars are named after the *panj-tan*, announcing the community's religious identity even today. The Pamirī Ismailis attribute the founding of their Muslim identity to Nasir-i Khusraw (b. 1004), a Persian theologian, philosopher, traveler, and poet who is believed to have introduced Ismaili teachings to Central Asia in the middle of the eleventh century CE. Ismaili doctrine has, therefore, had a formative influence on the cultural expression of the people of the region.

There is a balance between the exterior (*ẓāhir*), i.e., the literal meaning of sacred scriptures, and the esoteric (*bāṭin*) inner senses in Ismaili religious thought. This particular vision of Islam, which resembles other esoteric traditions, such as Sufism, finds expression in broader cultural forms and

is reflected in local musical genres and styles. Among the Pamirī Ismailis, spiritual musical concerts at which poetry is sung and accompanied on stringed instruments and frame drums serve as a means for the soul to travel towards the illumination of spiritual–mystical truths. As noted above, this performance genre referred to as *qasīda-khonī,* a heritage of devotional poetry and music, rooted in the matrix of the musical and poetic culture of the Pamirīs, among whom, from villages to the concert stages of the world, the human voice embodies the love of the divine, for country, and the nation.

Research Questions

This dissertation studies *qasīda-khonī* as a distinct musical, cultural practice of Central Asia that has been shaped by history, language, geography, and religion. My principal assumption is that *qasīda-khonī*, as a "contextually-embedded"[4] musical performance, helps to fulfill various socially cohesive functions concerning specific cultural processes drawn from broader social and cultural contexts. It is a central phenomenon within the religious practice and artistic expression in the area, and, therefore, expresses a special relationship between performance and identity. In particular, this dissertation analyzes the place *qasīda-khonī* holds for the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims of the GBAO in terms of how it contributes to the construction of a distinct geo-cultural identity. In order to determine the significance of *qasīda-khonī* and its place in the life of the Pamirī Ismailis Muslims, this dissertation attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What role does *qasīda-khonī* play in articulating the distinctive identity of Pamirī Ismaili Muslims?
2. How did *qasīda-khonī* help the Pamirī Ismailis in Badakhshan to preserve their religion and religious identity in times of social conflict?

[4] Regula Qureshi, "Muslim Devotional: Popular Religious Music and Muslim Identity under British, Indian and Pakistani Hegemony" in *Asian Music,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (Autumn 1992–Winter 1993): 111-121, http://www.jstor.org/stable/834453, last accessed on November 24, 2014.

3. In what ways does *qasīda-khonī*, as an indigenous religious musical performance of the Pamirī Ismailis today, represent the cultural and national identity of the Tajik people broadly speaking on the global level?

Three historical periods must be distinguished to answer these questions. The first, the pre-Soviet period, can be recounted through local narratives and hagiographical materials and secondary literature available from the region. This phase can be broadly articulated as a phase of "Islamization." The second phase, during the Soviet period, marks a shift from "Islamization" to Socialism. The third phase begins with the introduction of globalization, following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the independence of Tajikistan.

In light of these three phases, the first chapter presents an overview of the spread of Ismailism in the region and the formation of Pamirī Ismaili religious practices. It will help us to understand the historical setting in which *qasīda-khonī* emerged as a musical genre, developed, and became a foundational source of reference for Pamirī Ismaili identity.

The second chapter examines the individual learning experiences of the musicians and the spiritual dimensions of the *qasīda-khonī* performance tradition. It presents the way that the Pamirī Ismailis learn the practice and discusses contexts in which the musicians have become leading figures in serving their communities in religious events. To address this aspect, I draw on examples from autobiographical stories provided by the performers and participants about how the performances serve the community.

The third chapter examines the performance in its various social and cultural contexts. Here, I delineate the social and cultural space of *qasīda-khonī* and discuss the institutions and actors of this performance tradition, their responsibilities, and their service to the Badakhshanī social and

cultural realms. I will also examine how the *qasīda-khon*s (i.e., its performers) translate their personal and communal music for a broader global musical stage.

The fourth and fifth chapters examine the song texts and the music of the *qasīda-khonī* tradition as an institution of culture-making, and its transmission closely. I will highlight the role of the song texts and the music in projecting various interconnected identities, and their function in promoting a musical culture comprising of the production of CDs, cassettes, and videos; and the organization of concerts and cultural events where *qasīda-khonī* is performed as a national musical heritage rather than being practiced as only a local religious ritual. This dissertation emphasizes the importance of this indigenous spiritual practice as part of the cultural politics of contemporary Tajikistan. It testifies to the role played by musicians and singers in the production of culture and in shaping national cultural heritage, identity and politics.

As for its disciplinary orientation, this study offers an analysis of *qasīda-khonī* and its evolution over time and focuses on the value of this music in the religious, socio-cultural, and political lives of Pamirī Ismaili Muslims. Consequently, this study falls within the scholarly tradition of ethnomusicology and contributes to the growing body of literature concerning the role of music in Islamic civilizations and Muslim societies.[5] It also locates itself in Ismaili studies [6] and additionally

[5] John Baily, "The Role of Music in the Creation of an Afghan National Identity, 1923-73," in *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1997); Benjamin Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World: Music, Prayer, and Healing in the Pamir Mountains* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gabrielle van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study of the Songs and Poems of the Ismā'īli of Tajik Badakhshan* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2006); Kathleen Hood, *Music in Druze Life: Ritual, Values and Performance Practice* (London: Druze Heritage Foundation, 2007); Marin Stoke, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 1997); Earle H. Waugh, *Memory, Music and Religion: Morocco's Mystical Chanters* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005); Federico Spinetti, "Music, Politics and Nation Building in Post-Soviet Tajikistan," in *Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia*, ed. Nooshin Laudan (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 115-142; Lorraine Hiromi Sakata, *Music in the Mind: The concept of Music and Musicians in Afghanistan* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1983); and Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[6] Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismaili Muslim Saint, Pir Shams* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); and Ali Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

contributing to the scholarly research focused on the question of music in Islam,[7] and, more broadly, the contribution of music to the enrichment of Muslim civilizations.

Research Methodology

In this section, I discuss the method I used to conduct fieldwork for this dissertation. It also articulates the challenges that I faced during the fieldwork and my views on the nature of auto-ethnography, i.e., researching one's community and one's identity, as a cultural object.

My fieldwork began in August 2011 and continued until October 2014. I conducted it in three cycles: the first cycle was from August 2011 to January 2012; the second commenced in March 2012 and ended in June 2012, and the third cycle began in August 2012 and ended on October 2014. I have recorded 75 interviews; I observed and participated in three *qasīda-khonī* performances in different contexts, including funeral ceremonies, and I analyzed ethnographic films of performances of *qasīda-khonī.*

I can describe my fieldwork as a process involving moments of friendship, rejection, accomplishments, and challenges. Through this process, I have sought to make sense of some aspects of Pamirī Ismaili religious, cultural, and social realities. Since the main focus of my research was to study *qasīda-khonī*, the musical performance genre, I entered the field with questions about the role this musical tradition played in the lives of its performers; in more full terms, what are the different significances of *qasīda-khonī* for the Pamirī Ismailis?

The leading site of my fieldwork was the GBAO with its many different districts and valleys, each of which, to make matters both more complicating and exciting, has its language and particular cultural patterns. My fieldwork involved observations and participation in rituals and other performances at various locations in the GBAO: Shughnan, Rushan, Roshtqala, Ishkashim, and

[7] Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam* (England: Scholar Press, 1995).

Wakhan. I also collected data outside of the Pamirs, particularly in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. I was thus engaged in what Clifford refers to as "multi-locale fieldwork."[8]

My fieldwork involved working in various shifting spaces. I conducted interviews about *qasīda-khonī* performances that had occurred many months earlier, including interviewing Dushanbe residents who had attended a specific *qasīda-khonī* performance in the GBAO. I interviewed some of my informants even after I had left the GBAO through email, Facebook, and Skype. I had imagined a conventionally closed research field in the GBAO, but *qasīda-khonī* itself emerged as much more open field site.

During the initial days of my arrival for research in Tajikistan, I visited friends and relatives and was transparent with them regarding my reasons for being in Dushanbe and the GBAO by, first, asking questions about *qasīda-khonī* in conversations. My daily conversations with friends and relatives were almost exclusively about *qasīda-khonī,* and I made it a habit to ask everyone I spoke with about their knowledge and views of the performance and its phenomena. In this piece of research, when referring to the GBAO, I take the area to refer to both the geographical space as well as to the socio-cultural contexts in which I was able to observe and make sense of *qasīda-khonī*. It is the enmeshing of social and geographic locations that enabled me to pursue and understand how *qasīda-khonī,* as a musical tradition was both a "product" and a "producer" of the Pamirī Ismaili culture, and as such, an ethnographic field site.

It should be noted that in the GBAO, I was not only a researcher to many but was also a guest, a friend, a close acquaintance, a student, a family member and most conveniently, a Pamirī Ismaili like them. The cultural implications, behavioral patterns, and the geographical location of shared

[8] J. Clifford, "Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology," in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science,* eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 185-225.

Pamirī Ismaili traditions and recognizably similar modes of artistic thinking played an essential role in my fieldwork. What also reinforced this connectedness was my participation in several ritual practices specific to the Pamirī Ismailis' faith. I was bound to my interlocutors ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and familially. We were all speakers of the same language. Although I am originally from the Wakhan region and speak the Wakhī language, I studied in Khorog, the capital of the GBAO, for five years (from 1995 to 2001). These years allowed me to learn the Shughnī language, which predominantly spoken in Khorog. For this reason, it took minimal effort for me to establish a 'familial' relationship since we shared the language, a set of theological beliefs, kinship system, and cultural and religious practices.

I am myself a practicing Ismaili, and my access to knowledge about that faith and the culture of the Pamirī Ismailis has affected my reflecting process and informs the analysis of the data in this dissertation. I believe that my study provides a unique contribution to knowledge about the Pamirī Ismailis and their musical, cultural heritage in particular, as well as more broadly, the cultural heritage of contemporary Tajikistan.

Videotaped recordings were also crucially helpful in acquiring an in-depth understanding of the *qasīda-khonī* performance. Through the visual medium, I was able to capture both the details and the dynamic of the interplay between the *qasīda-khonī* form, its performers, and the audience, along with their gestural behavior. To verify my observations, I consulted and checked my conclusions with *qasīda-khonī* participants themselves. This way, it was crucial, especially regarding the video recordings of performances, utilizing what Stone and Stone term the "feedback interview."[9] I have collected and recorded around 20 *qasīda-khon*s in several video recordings, recorded at different performances over some time.

[9] Ruth M. Stone and Verlon L. Stone, "Event, Feedback, and Analysis: Research Media in the Study of Music Events," *Ethnomusicology*,Vol. 25, No. 2 (1981): 215-25.

The importance of *qasīda-khonī* can only be understood through a focus on particular performers. For this reason, I studied the repertoire of specific ensembles such as the Pamir Ensemble and the Samo group, as well as individuals such as Zaimkhon, Azizkhon, Mamadali, Aqnazar, Aliakbar and Kholmamad, performers well versed in the repertoire and knowledge of *qasīda-khonī*. It is these individuals' lives in performance that provides the concrete context for my ethnographic study of *qasīda-khonī*. Only by becoming familiar with the overall setting as well as the musical repertoire, could I analyze the *qasīda-khonī* musical tradition. It allowed me to understand the performers, their musical and textual collections, their performances, and their background and relationships within the community.

Also, video recordings in the performers' possession helped me in assembling a coherent and representative ethnographic picture of the *qasīda-khonī* as they practice it today. This study presents not only intimate performances but also the experience of *qasīda-khonī* at shrines, *jamoat-khonas* (the prayer halls of the Ismailis), national and international festivals.

Clarifying the Terminology

As I have emphasized previously, the GBAO is a region of great linguistic diversity. Therefore, many words and terms exist relating to the musical culture and rituals of the area. It is necessary to explain these terms to the reader, so that they can understand the complexity of the linguistic geography and, particularly, the cultural patterns of the region. Besides, I feel obliged to devote a special section to this issue because some scholarly works on Badakhshan, specifically some research in English, that gives a general picture of the region, to my mind tend to misrepresent the area. In a majority of the literature on the Pamirī musical culture written in English, the authors have collected and analyzed their data either based on personal research only in the capital of Badakhshan, Khorog, or have employed a local research assistant from the city, who speaks English but lacks of detailed knowledge of local terminology, thus giving way to

misunderstandings and misinformation. An example of this tendency is the usage of the term *maddoh* for the *qasīda-khonī* performance in English writing.[10] This term confines to performances in the regions where people speak the Shughnī language. Attending to the other languages spoken in the area is, however, very important when writing about the GBAO. There are no immutable traits in the whole of Pamirī Ismaili culture, but many scholars discount the variations that exist among the members of the broader community. The present study is an attempt to argue against this tendency and show the difference where it exists.

The tradition of religious music performance among the Pamirī Ismailis has acquired distinct forms and names in different districts of Badakhshan. While referred to as *mado* or *mado-khonī* in the Shughnan and Rushan districts, it is known as *qsoid-khonī* in the Wakhan Valley[11] and *qasoid-khonī* amongst the Tajik/Dari-speaking population in Ishkashim and the Gharan Valley of Badakhshan. In addition to phonetic variations of *mado*, *qsoid*, *qasoid* and *qasīda*, other local terms for this genre used in the GBAO are, for example, *haydarī* among Ismailis in the Darwaz district and *madhiya* in the local literature and some scholarly materials. I employ the umbrella term "*qasīda-khonī"* in my study, the reasons for which I will elaborate further in Chapter 2, where I discuss the performance itself.

Another example of such variation found is in the usage of the terms "Pamirī" and "Badakhshanī," which generally define the identity of the people of the Pamirs. Both of these words have predominantly geographic, cultural, or ethnic connotations, as well as particular religious ones. In matters of identification, these are culturally and ethnically contested words due to the various

[10] Benjamin D., Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World: Music, Prayer, and Healing in the Pamir Mountains* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[11] Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, "*Qsoid-khonī* in the Wakhan Valley of Badakhshan," in *Music of Central Asia: An Introduction,* eds. Theodore Levin, Elmira Kuchumkulova, and Saida Daukayeva (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

languages and cultural specificities, especially so since these specificities touch the lives of young people today, who feel the need to differentiate themselves from people with other identities.

The ethnonym “Pamirī” relates its bearers to the Pamir Mountains. A majority of people in Badakhshan today have adopted the term “Pamirī” to refer to themselves, differentiating themselves from other ethnic groups in Badakhshan and other citizens of Tajikistan. It is attributed exclusively to members of the Ismaili community in the region and bears both ethnic and religious connotations. “Badakhshanī” is substituted for the word “Pamirī” on many occasions or is even used interchangeably to define the inhabitants of the region. However, in comparison with “Pamirī,” “Badakhshanī” does not have any religious connotation. It is used to refer to all the inhabitants of Badakhshan, including Sunnī Muslims and the Tajik-speaking peoples. Today, “Pamirī” is applied as an ethno-confessional and cultural identity for the locals of the regions of Shughnan, Rushan, Ishkashim, Wakhan, Gharan, and partly, Murghab. Inhabitants of Vanj and Darwaz, two districts in Badakhshan, who are predominantly Sunnī Muslims, do not call themselves “Pamirī” but “Badakhshanī.” Scholars who write about Tajikistan often mistakenly use the terms “Pamirī” and “Badakhshanī” interchangeably. In this dissertation, I only employ the term “Pamirī” for Ismailis because it is not only correct and used by the local people, but also used by outsiders referring to the Ismaili population in the region.

The Discourse of Music and Musical Performance in Islam: Ongoing Debates

In its introduction to Badakhshan, Islam blended with various aspects of the pre-Islamic culture, which led to new forms of Islamic practice. This has come to be known in the social sciences as "folk Islam," an Islam that "tends to combine Qur'anic Islam with other beliefs and practices of a particular culture."[12] In a similar sense, I find that, through the production of music and performance of the *qasīda-khonī* tradition, the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims have integrated themselves into the Muslim civilization in general, and the global Ismaili religious and cultural network in particular, while simultaneously retaining their political, national, and social idioms in Tajikistan and beyond.

Thus, *qasīda-khonī* has become a convenient form for the expression of Islam in the region, although musical performance is regarded as unlawful and condemned by various orthodox religious authorities in Islam, who often dismiss 'local' spiritual practice as deviation from a religious norm. As Islam has always been practiced in different local contexts, it has resulted in multifaceted practices in the Muslim world, which function today as an expressive tool of "Muslimness" in the respective context. These distinct practices remain essential, both from the perspective of identifying the self as Muslim and the ascription of that identity from the outside. Islamic rituals and their practice provide a socio-historical means of looking at how Muslims have attempted to express their religious identity and thus created a discourse around the meaning of being Muslim.[13] These particularities emerged within the religion under discussion, and each has had different forms and trajectories. As Clifford Geertz points out, "Islam has taken many forms, not all of them were Qur'anic."[14] The Pamirī Ismaili Muslims express their faith using musical

[12] George W. Braswell Jr., *Islam: Its Prophets, Peoples, Politics and Power* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 286.
[13] A. Rippin, *Muslims their Religious Beliefs and Practices,* 3rd edition (London/New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2005), 279.
[14] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1971), 12.

performance, although the notion of musical performance has been condemned throughout the history of Islam by many religious authorities.

Many Muslim theologians and scholars have interpreted the fundamental sources of Islam – the Qur'an and the Hadith – in different ways, and the general case against music has been that it is unlawful in Islam because those who listen to music lose control over their reason and behavior.[15] This view condemns music and musical performances and considers those people who engage in its practice as infidels and polytheists.[16]

However, some Muslim thinkers point to evidence from the foundational Islamic sources that underscore the lawfulness, indeed desirability, of music in Islam. One of the great Muslim scholars, Madjd al-din al-Ghazālī (d. 1121), dedicated the longest chapter of his work to the legality of music, and the role of musical instruments, song, and ecstatic dance in Islam.[17] His brother, the famous religious reformer Abū Ḥāmed al Ghazālī, considered music and singing to be the means of evoking what is truly in one's heart. He found music useful for encouraging pilgrimage, rousing the martial spirit, evoking lamentation and sorrow, arousing joy, eliciting love and longing, and inspiring the love of God.[18] As a Sufi practice, music played an important role in Islam and was considered to be a tool that "can stir one to long for union with one's beloved, can rouse the seeker to long for and love of God, the most beautiful and most worthy object of love."[19]

Apart from its religious and mystical functions, music played a significant role in relieving the dullness of time. For example, Miller, who studies the music and songs of Persia, notes that the

[15] D. Safvat, *Mystical Aspects of Authentic Iranian Music* (New York: Center for Traditional and Spiritual Music of the East, 1985), 2-3.
[16] A. Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-Cultural Study* (England: Scholar Press, 1995), 35.
[17] Asliddin Nizomov, *Ta'rikh-i Musiqi-yi Tojik* [The History of Tajik Music] (Dushanbe: Adib, 2014).
[18] A. Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A socio-cultural study,* 44.
[19] F. Shehadi, *Philosophies of Music in Medieval Islam* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1997), 119.

Prophet Muhammad used to make Anas Ibn Malik sing the *huda*, a pre-Islamic Arabian song when he was traveling, because it helped to relieve the dullness of a long journey.[20]

The debate is ongoing within Islam as to whether listening to music and taking part in musical activities are lawful or unlawful practices for Muslims. My concern here is not to decide this question for Islam, but to show how some Muslims deal with the foundational sources of Islam in their everyday practice. Different indicators and examples show us that even though the Qur'an and the Hadith are the primary sources of legitimation in Muslim societies, the implementation of these sources in the practical life of Muslims varies from region to region. It attests to the encounter of Islam with different civilizations and cultures around the world, and how Muslims absorb, adapt, and transmit different cultural values into their own social and cultural systems, labeling them Islamic. This very process led to the development of Muslim civilizations, or in Goody's words, "spearheading developments as well as learning from other civilizations."[21] Muslims are all unified in their relationship to God, but in practice, they have different views that are the products of socio-cultural and historical forces other than Islam, as Manger has pointed out.[22]

Thus, it is not enough to argue that in conventional practices of Islam, Muslims base their practice on the "original sources," i.e., the Qur'an and the Hadith. This view cannot be applied to all Muslims around the world. Many Muslims do not have direct access to such sources but follow "interpreters," i.e., the local, literate authority figures. In some parts of the Muslim world, such as Badakhshan, people depend on the preaching of missionaries, merchants, and travelers to help them understand Islam. The role of these missionaries, merchants, and travelers was significant in transmitting knowledge, preaching, and establishing a new socio-cultural and religious structure in

[20] L.C. Miller, *Music and Song in Persia, The Art of Avaz* (Great Britain: Curtzon Press, 1999), 15.
[21] J. Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 108.
[22] L. Manger, *Muslim Diversity: Local Islam in Global Contexts* (England: Curzon Press, 1999), 18.

the areas they traveled. People recognized them as charismatic figures, and their activities themselves have become sources of spiritual practice and belief which are active until today. *Qasīda-khonī* is one such religious practice. It has become a foundational source of understanding Islam in Badakhshan and serves as an example of the amalgamation of various cultural practices under Islam and the diversity of Muslim cultures in the world today.

Studies on the *Qasīda-khonī*

Although much research conducted on the study of the culture of the Pamirs in the Soviet Union and in post-Soviet time, unfortunately, investigation and reflection on the musical culture within the academic community are not comprehensive. Russian and early Soviet ethnographers have published scholarly accounts of the musical culture of the Pamirīs from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, but hardly by any local researchers. Russian explorers and their studies focused more on geographical and linguistic aspects.[23] In the Soviet literature there is inadequate information about *qasīda-khonī*. In the available sources, one can only find short references to the practice.

There are several reasons why *qasīda-khonī* did not receive serious scholarly attention during the Soviet period, which in a way has led to the obscurity of the practice. The first reason is the geographic location of the region. It situated in a mountainous area, where traveling is not easy. Secondly, *qasīda-khonī* was considered a religious practice, and all religious practices banned from public attention during the Soviet period. Thirdly, Ismailis, because of their historical experience of persecution, were reluctant to disclose their confessional practices to outsiders and foreigners.

[23] Munir Pirumshoev, *Pamir v Russkoy istoriografii vtoroy poloviny XIX-nachala XX vv.* [Pamir in Russian Historiography of the Second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries] (Dushanbe: Rossiysko-Tadzhikskiy Slavianskiy Universitet, 2012).

Based on the reasons mentioned above, *qasīda-khonī* was not a serious object of study during the Soviet period.

Nizom Nurjonov, a prominent Tajik musicologist and art critic in the late 1970s emphasizes that the music and musical culture of the Pamirīs had not received sufficient scholarly attention. The first mention of the music and musical culture of the Pamirīs, according to Nurjonov, appeared in the work of the Russian linguist and ethnographer I.I. Zarubin, who collected samples of musical instruments from 1920 to 1930 in the Shughnan and Bartang Valleys of Badakhshan.[24] In 1940, N. Mironov published a book, *Muzika Tadzhikov* [The Music of the Tajiks], and issued the first recordings of Pamirī music.[25] Although these authors contributed significantly to the cultural studies of this region, they left quite a few essential themes concerning the religious and cultural lives of the people of the mountainous region unexplained, and even untouched.

The first scholar who mentioned about *qasīda-khonī* in Tajik Badakhshan was a Russian ethnographer, Mikhail S. Andreev. In his book from 1953, he talked about the funeral practices of the Pamirīs and wrote that "the people of the Pamirs sing *qasoid* with an instrument called *rubab*, and the performance continues until dawn of the next day."[26]

The most extensive research into the music and musical practices of the area started in 1959. Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan organized it and involved a group of scholars sent to Badakhshan under the supervision of Nurjonov. They researched 1971.[27] Even though this group studied many aspects of the musical culture of Badakhshan, in their work, only a few remarks found on the performance of *qasīda-khonī.* Nurjonov highlights some narratives that his informants

[24] F. Karomatov and N. Nurjonov, *Muzikal'noye Iskusstvo Pamira*, [The Musical Arts of the Pamirs], Vol. 1., (Moskva: Sovetskiy Kompozitor , 1978), 6-7.
[25] N.N. Mirnonov, *Muzika Tadzhikov* [Music of Tajiks] (Stalinabad: Sovetskaya Muzika, 1932), 30.
[26] Mikhail, S. Andreev, *Tadzhiki Doliny Khuf: Verkhov'ya Amudar'yi* [The Tajiks of the Khuf Valley: Upstream Amudarya] (Stalinabad: Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR, 1953), 193.
[27] F. Karomatov and Nizom Nurjonov, *Musikal'noye Iskusstvo Pamira*, 7.

provided him regarding the importance of the performance in funeral ceremonies; this is the only information available from Soviet scholarship on the performance of *qasīda-khonī*. They consider *qasīda-khonī* to be a genre that consists of sung poetry with religious and didactical meanings, performed at funeral ceremonies.[28] From their work, it appears that the function of the *qasīda-khonī* performance was very restricted. It was a mourning ritual only, and one cannot find any other views on its performance outside the ceremonial mourning context.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the GBAO region attracted several scholars from outside of Tajikistan, and some scholarly work emerged in English. Gabrielle van den Berg conducted the first comprehensive study of the songs and poems of Badakhshan. She wrote a monograph dedicated to sung poetry in Badakhshan, entitled *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study of the Songs and Poems of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan* (2006). She divides all forms of poetry into two main categories: secular and religious. Poems that have religious and didactical connotations are considered to be part of the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire.[29] She discusses *qasīda-khonī* in her book and focuses on the use of different genres in the performances. She points out that *qasīda-khonī* includes different genres such as stories (*hikoyat*), odes (*qasoid*), stanzas (*mukhammas*), and prayers (*du'o*).

A work published a few years after Berg's book was by Benjamin Koen. He studies *qasīda-khonī* from a medical and ethnomusicological point of view and focuses on the music and its impact on the process of healing. He considers it an integrative, complementary, and alternative medicine of healing (ICAM), and argues that "in the Pamirs musical, religious, spiritual and scientific domains of knowledge are connected," and, "music, prayer, and meditation are related medical and

[28] Ibid., 12-15.
[29] Gabrielle van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study of the Songs and Poems of the Ismaili's of Tajik Badakhshan* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2006), 214-300.

psychological efficacious practices." [30] He suggests that these can be used in clinical and public health settings. He also considers *qasīda-khonī* to be a central aspect of the religious life of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims and illustrates how music, prayer, and poetry can express a unified existence in the context of healing.

In the realm of ethnomusicology, *qasīda-khonī* is discussed in an article by John Morgen O'Connell entitled "Sustaining Difference: Theorizing Minority Music in Badakhshan," in which he shows how music sustains differences in Central Asia. Focusing on this particular musical form, he argues that, "music not only operates as a medium for differentiating cultural identities within a complex multicultural setting but that it also serves to sustain *difference*."[31]

The most recent research conducted on the *qasīda-khonī* was by a local scholar named Haydarmamad Tavakkalov. In his dissertation, "*Traditsiyia Ispolneniya Madhiya v Badakhshane*" [The Tradition of *Madhiya* and Its Performance in Badakhshan], he presents a comprehensive description of *qasīda-khonī* and its performance on religious occasions. His ethnographic work demonstrates the various repertoires of the performers in different parts of Badakhshan and discusses the performance as a religious practice.[32]

Apart from these studies of *qasīda-khonī*, there is a body of new publications available today that deals with various aspects of the spiritual and cultural lives of the Central Asian Ismailis. The

[30] Benjamin D. Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World: Music, Prayer and Healing in the Pamir Mountains* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-4.
[31] John Morgen O'Connell, "Sustaining Difference: Theorising Minority Music in Badakhshan," in *Manifold Identities: Studies on Music and Minorities*, eds. Ursula Hemetek, Gerda Lechleitner, Inna Naroditskaya, and Anna Czekanowska (London: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2004), 1.
[32] Haydarmamad Tavakkalov, *Traditsiyia ispolneniya Madhiya v Badakhshane* [The Tradition of Madhiya and Its Performance in Badakhshan], Ph.D. Dissertation (Dushanbe: Donish, 2006).

works of Tohir Kalandarov,[33] Jo-Ann Gross,[34] Abdulmamad Iloliev,[35] and others provide new research on the Ismailis of the Pamirs.

Over the last century, *qasīda-khonī* has gone through many changes in terms of the development of new forms and styles, genres and their hybridization, and functions of performance. Recent years have witnessed an expansion of *qasīda-khonī*'s role as a representation of a Central Asian spiritual and folk culture. It is recorded on CDs and DVDs and internationally performed as a form of entertainment in concerts. After the collapse of the Communist regime in Tajikistan, *qasīda-khonī* entered a more extensive representational space. It is now performed on stage, and many performers of *qasīda-khonī* take part in musical competitions in national and international musical programs. *Qasīda-khonī* is studied as a professional form of music and is sung in the National Conservatory of Tajikistan. As national and international representatives of organized Central Asian folk culture, a number of its performers participate in musical festivals annually convened by the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan. Some of the performers are also involved in the Aga Khan Music Initiative, an international organization that supports the efforts of Central Asian musicians and communities to sustain, further develop, and transmit their musical traditions.

Based on the secondary literature written about *qasīda-khonī* and my four-year-long fieldwork in the region, my dissertation focuses on the place of *qasīda-khonī* in the cultural life of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims today and its function and connection with the rapid changes in society, particularly in the way music serves as a point of expression for evolving social and cultural identities. In this dissertation, I attempt to discuss the changes that have occurred in the lives of

[33] Tohir Kalandarov, "Religiya i traditsii: religioznaya situatsiya na Pamire (k probleme religioznogo sinkretizma)" [Religion and Tradition: Religious situation in the Pamirs (study the problems of religious syncretism)], in *Vostok. Afro-aziatskiye obshestva: istoriya i sovremennost',* no. 6 (2000): 36-49.
[34] Jo-Ann Gross, "Foundational Legends, Shrines, and Ismaili Identity in Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan," in *Muslims and Others in Sacred Space,* ed. Margaret Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 164-192.
[35]Abdulmamad Iloliev, *The Ismaili-Sufi Sage of Pamir: Muborak-i Wakhani and the Esoteric Tradition of the Pamiri Muslims* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008).

people and how this has affected the musical culture of the region, with a particular focus on their religious practices and emphasizing the interconnectedness of music, culture, and religion in the GBAO. My argument relates all these developments in art and society to the making of a Pamirī Ismaili identity in Tajikistan today.

Chapter 2: The Pamirī Ismaili Muslim Identity and Religious Practices in Badakhshan

I begin my study by outlining the salient moments in the political history of the Gorno–Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO), starting with the Great Game in the latter half of the nineteenth century, into the Soviet era, and then the post-Soviet Civil War period, and ending with a brief introduction to the post-Soviet era changes. My aim is not to provide an exhaustive account of the GBAO's history, but rather to give a contextualization through a review of the history of the region from secondary sources, and to delineate Pamirī accounts of the past in regard to historical changes that impacted the cultural and religious practices of the area and influenced the formation of interconnected identities. This is intended to help situate the discussion about identity construction as it connects with historical transformations and the experience thereof, and, in particular, to determine the role played by *qasīda-khonī* in expressing, sustaining, and evolving these identities in our own time.

The Pamirī Ismaili people dwell along the Panj River, surrounded by the Pamir Mountains, and constitute one of the largest Ismaili communities in the world.[36] This section presents a brief historical survey of the formation and evolution of Pamirī Ismaili's identity in the region to determine the place of *qasīda-khonī* within the diverse Pamirī Ismaili traditions. Attempting to provide a singular definition of this religious identity is problematic as it has drawn upon and integrated many other forms of socio-cultural practice and vocabulary.[37] The development of Pamirī Ismaili's spiritual practices in Tajikistan, referred to today as *Sunnat-i Nosir-i Khusraw* [the Tradition of Nāṣir-i Khusraw], can be best understood within three overlapping historical and

[36] Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of Ismailis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).
[37] Azim Nanji and Sarfaroz Niyozov, "Silk Road: Crossroads and Encounters of Faiths" in *The Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Creating Trust*, ed. Smithsonian Institution. Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution and Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, 2002), 37-43.

cultural contexts. These are correlated with the three historical periods mentioned in the introduction: (1) from the time of the spread of Ismaili ideas in Central Asia (i.e. the 8th century until the late 19th century); (2) from the late 19th century until the collapse of the Soviet Union; and (3) the post-Soviet period.[38]

Historically, each of these periods has played a profound role in shaping the development and transformation of Pamirī Ismaili traditions and culture in Tajikistan. Their contribution is noticeable in such features as plurality within the tradition and the changing conceptions of religious and cultural identity. To place the study of the Pamirī Ismaili cultures within the framework of these three periods, and to appreciate the dynamic and fluid interaction between them, allows for an integrated and nuanced understanding of religious practices and their social significance.

Pre-Islamic History: Diversity of Identities and Belief Systems

Before the spread of Islam in the region, ancestors of the people who now identified as Pamirī Ismailis professed faith in various belief systems. Several half-ruined castles that belonged to the local pre-Islamic rulers in both Tajik and Afghan Badakhshan point to the existence of pre-Islamic societies in the area. These castles, in their architecture, show the presence of diverse beliefs and religious practices in Badakhshan, and they do not correspond with anything from the Islamic period. The most famous of these is the Castle of Qah-Qaha (*qal'a-yi Qah-Qaha*) in Namadgut village in the Wakhan district. Local people describe Qah-Qaha as a black-clad infidel (*kofir-i siyoh-push*) who had two brothers and two sisters. His brother and sister, Zangibor and Zulasham, owned a castle in Yamchun village; his brother Zamr reigned from a castle in Hisor village, and

[38] Sarfaroz Niyozov, "Shi'iti-Ismailiti Tsentral'noy Azii: Evolyutsiya, Preyemstvennost, Peremeni" [Shia-Ismailis of Central Asia: Evolution, Continuity, Changes] in *Tsentral'naya Aziya i Kavkaz [Central Asia and Caucasus]* No. 6, 30 (2003): 45.

his sister Zulkhumor governed from a castle in Afghan Wakhan.[39] As part of their religion, these people worshipped fire and only wore black clothing.[40] Legends and some current stories about fire worshipping and veneration of the sun and the moon indicate the possibility of some continuation of pre-Islamic religious practices, such as *mehrparastī* (a pre-Islamic practice of worshipping the sun and the moon), and Manichaean and Zoroastrian customs and rites in the region.

The Spread of Ismaili Ideas in Central Asia: The Integration of Pre-Islamic and Islamic Practices

The history of the expansion of Islam into the region remains unclear and up for debate. The story of how the Ismaili tradition became rooted in the area, even more, obscured over time. The history of its origin and development is confusing and complicated, "is marked by ruptures and discontinuities,"[41] and embedded in layers of various oral and written accounts of preachers, who are commonly believed to have been responsible for converting local inhabitants to Ismailism. This confusion may be related to the discreet manner in which early Ismaili preachers disseminated ideas so as not to attract undue attention and to avoid persecution by the orthodoxy. This has resulted in scholars expressing conflicting views on the Pamirī Ismaili tradition and its adherents.

The presence of Ismailis commonly assumed in the region as a result of the activities of a unique Ismaili institution – the *da'wa* (mission), an organized and productive system to propagate the Ismaili interpretation of Islam. Scholars studying Islamic history generally agree that Islamization was a long process to which traders, rulers, and preachers of different sects (especially the Sufis)

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[39] For archaeological information on the castles of the Wakhan, see Aktam Babaev, *Kreposti Drevnego Wakhana*, *[Ancient Castles of Wakhan]* (Dushanbe: Donish, 1973). For more details on the legends and stories about Qah-Qaha, see Alowat Qurbonshoev, *Wakhon osorkhona-i ta'rikh [Wakhan a Museum of History]* (Dushanbe: Nodir, 2009), 25-44; and Odinamamdi Mirzo, *Wakhan: A Historic and Ethnographic Study* (Khorog: Irfon, 2010).

[40] Andrey Snesarev, "Religiya i Obichai Gortsev Zapadnogo Pamira" ["Religion and Customs of Mountaineers in the Western Pamir"], *Turkestanskiye Vedomosti [Gazette of Turkistan]* No. 90 (1904): 412.

[41] Daniel Baben, *The Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Memory and Textualization in Early Modern Persian Ismailism* (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 2015), 6.

contributed significantly, and which resulted in the transformation of social values and identities.[42] In the context of Badakhshan, conversion to Islam seems to be primarily the result of missionary activities in the past, as has been pointed out by several scholars of Islamic conversion:

> *The first preachers of Islam, after the Arab conquest of Transoxiana, were members of heterodox sects, including the Ismailis, who propagated their creeds without the support of the state, and in this respect, as well as working among the urban lower classes and rural and tribal societies, they preceded the Sufis.*[43]

The Ismaili *dā'īs*[44] and their network of *da'wa* (mission or propaganda), patronized by the Fatimids of Egypt, were very active during the reign of the Samanid *amīr* (king) Nasr b. Ahmadi Sāmānī (914–943), especially in Bukhara and Samarqand.[45] Through their network of *da'wa,* conducted in the form of teaching sessions known as *majālis* (singular: *majlis*), addressed to various audiences,[46] the individual *dā'ī* succeeded in converting many political and intellectual figures of the Samanid Court, including the *amīr* himself; his *wazīr* (vizier), Bal'amī; and the famous poet, Rūdakī.[47]

As a consequence of the political upheaval precipitated by the rise of the Turkic dynasties of Ghaznavids (962–1186), Qarakhanids (999–1211), and later Seljuqs (1071–1243) in Central Asia, the spread of Ismailism gradually decreased and its followers faced persecution.[48] This might have

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[42] Devin DeWeese, *Islamisation and Native Religion in the Golden Horde* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994) and Devin DeWeese, *An "Uvaisi" Sufi in Timurid Mawarannahr: Notes on Hagiography and the Taxonomy of Sanctity in the Religious History of Central Asia,* Papers on Inner Asia, No. 22 (Bloomington:, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University, 1993).

[43] Levtzion Nehemia, "Toward a Comparative Study of Islamisation" in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979), 17.

[44] The term *dā'ī* refers to religious propagandists or missionaries from various Muslim groups. It was a title given to an eminent person who was in charge of the Ismaili mission during the Fatimid Period (909-1171). For information on the Fatimid network of *da'wa*, see Farhad Daftary, "The Ismāʿīlī *da'wa* Outside the Fāṭimid *dawla*" in *L'Egypte Fatimide: Son Art et Son Histoire*, ed. Barrucand Marianne (Paris: Presses de l'Universite de Paris-Sorbonne), 29-43.

[45] Samuel Stern, "The Early Ismaiīlī Missionaries in North West Persia and in Khurasan and Transoxiana," *BSOAS* 23 (1960): 56-90; and Patricia Crone and Luke Treadwell, "A New Text on Ismalism at the Samanid Court" in *Text, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D.S. Richards*, ed. Chase F. Pobinson (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 37-67.

[46] P.E. Walker, "Fatimid Institutions of Learning," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 34 (1997): 179-200.

[47] Hokim Qalandarov, *Rudaki va Ismoiliya [Rudaki and Ismailism]* (Dushanbe: Ergraph, 2012); and Abdulmamad Iloliev, *The Ismaili–Sufi Sage of Pamir* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008).

[48] P. Golden, "The Karakhānids and Early Islam," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 343-370.

been the critical factor that led to the relocation of the Ismaili *da'wa* from the lowland places of Central Asia to isolated mountainous areas, such as the Pamirs. In the Pamirs, Ismailism is strongly associated with the name of Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. 1080), a Persian-speaking poet, theologian, and philosopher, who is believed to have brought Ismailism to Badakhshan.[49]

The Legend of Nāṣir-i Khusraw in Badakhshan

Nāṣir-i Khusraw's mission in the Pamirs known among Pamirī Ismaili Muslims as the *da'wat-i Nosir* [mission of Nāṣir] or *sunnat-i Nosir* [tradition of Nāṣir]. In the second half of the 11th-century C.E, Nāṣir-i Khusraw was active as a Fatimid *dā'ī* in the area for over fifteen years. After being expelled from the territory of Balkh, before 1061, he traveled to Yumgan, remaining there until his death. Several of his philosophical and religious works have been composed in Yumgan, where he became the founder and patron saint of the Ismaili Muslim community of Badakhshan.[50] He incorporated the Fatimid *da'wa* within the frame of diverse local religious beliefs and practices and laid the foundation of the Ismaili Muslim community in the Pamirs.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw became an Ismaili after traveling to Cairo, the capital of the Fatimid state at the time. In Cairo, he met with the Ismaili chief missionary (*dā'ī al-du'āt*) al-Mu'ayyad fi-l Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1078) and attended his religious sessions called *al-majālis al-Mu'ayyadiyya*.[51] There, he was deeply inspired by Ismaili ideas. On his return to Balkh, he began to attempt to propagate the Ismaili faith. At that time Balkh was ruled by the Seljuq dynasty, which was persecuting adherents to the Ismaili doctrine and many of them sought refuge in surrounding regions. It was in this broader context that Nāṣir-i Khusraw left Balkh and sought shelter in the area of Yumgan in Badakhshan. In *Zod- ul-Musofirin [Travelling Provisions of Pilgrims],* Khusraw states that "when the disgraced

[49] Abdulmamad Iloliev, *The Ismaili –Sufi Sage of Pamir*, 28.
[50] Andrey Bertel's, *Nāṣir-i Khusraw i Ismailism*, *[Nāṣir-i Khusraw and Ismailism]* (Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura, 1959), 9.
[51] Heinz Halm, "The Ismaili Oath of Allegiance ('*ahd*) and the Sessions of Wisdom (*majālis al- ḥikma*) in Fatimid Times" in *Medieval Ismaili History and Thought*, ed. Farhad Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 91-115.

(*mal'un*) captured my home, I could not find a better cave than Yumgan."[52] Whether Nāṣir-i Khusraw sought a safe place for his existence or was sent as an Ismaili agent to the region is less important than the fact that his arrival in the area was seminal to the rise and evolution of Pamirī Ismailism. Many religious practices are associated with his mission by the community to this day, and people venerate him in the community as a *hazrat* [majesty], *hakīm* [sage], *shoh* [king], *sayyid* [descendant of the Prophet], *pīr* [saint], and *hujjat* [proof]. The community also considers him to be a member of the Prophet Muhammad's family, the *ahl-i bayt*.[53] A verse that I collected in October 2011 from Kholmamad, a *qasīda-khon* from Shughnan, refers to this belief:

> *Shoh Nosir-i Khusraw, ki gul-i bekhor ast,*
> *Az nasl-i Rasūl-u Haydar-i Karror ast.*
> *Dar sīna-i har ki mehr-i Nosir sabt buvad,*
> *Jon dar tan-i u chun la'l dar kuhsor ast.* [54]
>
> King Nāṣir is like a thornless rose;
> He is from the progeny of the Prophet and the Lion of God.
> In the heart of those who have Nāṣir's love,
> The soul in his body is like a ruby in the mountain.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw's name and memory are associated with many sacred natural sites, which serve for his followers as mediums for the establishment of a spiritual connection with God. One such place is Nāṣir-i Khusraw's spring situated in Porshnev village in Shughnan, which is believed to have gushed out of the ground through his intervention in response to the villagers' complaints about the lack of water for drinking and irrigation. In Ismaili oral and written traditions in Badakhshan, anecdotes and legends regarding Nāṣir-i Khusraw's mission play an essential role. One such account that describes the scope of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's travel to the Pamir Mountains is *Bahr al-akhbor [Ocean of News],* a local hagiographical report of Nāṣir-i Khusraw that was

[52] Nāṣir-i Khusraw, *Zod-ul-Musofirin [Travelling Provisions of Pilgrims],* eds. H. Elnazarov, R. Nazariev, and A. Alimardonov (Dushanbe: Shujoiyon, 2010), 3, 402.
[53] Wladimir Ivanow, *Nasir-i Khusraw and Ismailism* (Leiden: Brill ,1948), 7-8.
[54] Kholmamad Kholmamadov, interview, November 10, 2011, Khorog. Kholmamad emphasized that the author of this poem is unknown, and he called it *khalqī* (people's), meaning that "the people" composed it.

published in 1992, on the 990th anniversary of his birth. It describes his various adventures and miracles of conversion. He is said to have turned the horse of the Badakhshanī King Malik Jahon Shoh into a stone after which the ruler converted to Ismailism.[55]

Similar legends continue to be recounted in the Pamirs to this day. The significance and meaning of such stories, as Devin DeWeese emphasizes, "serve not as a source for history per se, but for religious values in general, and more to the point, religious ways of comprehending and imagining the significance of conversion and its meaning for communal identity."[56] These legends assist us to "reveal the essentially sacred act of 'founding' a community and defining it in fundamentally religious terms."[57] Nāṣir was hailed as a ruler of the community and found himself with many followers, among whom some may have been musicians who then became propagators of the new faith through their art.

Although the historical integrity of these stories may be questionable, their doctrinal and communal importance is evident, in that they explain how Nāṣir-i Khusraw could have introduced the doctrine of the Fatimid *da'wa* and adapted it to the local environment. The oral legends indicate a connection between Nāsir-i Khusraw and song and music. He is said to have appreciated music, and to have composed poems while working at the court of the Ghaznavid prince. The *amīr* was fond of Nāṣir's songs and would always order singers to perform his verses.[58]

Evidence such as above sheds light on Nāṣir-i Khusraw's attempts to adapt his teachings to the local environment, using the indigenous expressive culture. Music was only one way to attract people to the Ismaili faith. Missionaries such as Nāṣir would generally utilize local cultural forms and practices as vehicles for their message. In this regard, using local languages was another way

[55] R. Rahmonqulov, *Bahr –ul-akhbor [Ocean of News]* (Khorog: Pamir Press, 1991), 32-33.
[56] Devin DeWeese, *Islamisation and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 12.
[57] Ibid., 6.
[58] Wladimir Ivanow, *Nasir-i Khusraw and Ismailism*, 9.

to help people familiarize themselves with new messages, as was utilizing local narrative genres. For instance, Persian Ismaili missionaries in the South Asian subcontinent would deliver their message to a largely Hindu audience using the vernacular language, rather than Arabic or Persian. They employed local idioms and Hindu mythology, blending their Islamic and Ismaili doctrine with myths, images, and symbols already familiar to the Hindus, developing a tradition that is known today as *Satpanth* (the true path).[59] The *Satpanth* emerged among Ismaili Muslims in the South Asian subcontinent, known locally as Khojas. They perform a significant number of *ginans* (corpus of poetic–religious compositions of the Khoja Ismaili Muslims) as part of their spiritual practices [60] and have also influenced the spiritual practices of the Ismailis in the Pamirs today.

This process of acculturation is conceived by Ivanow, "as one during which the meaning and spirit of Islam were separated from its hard Arabic shell and two cultures welded together into one with remarkable tact and intuition."[61] When viewed from this perspective, we are able to see the Pamirī Ismaili tradition as a multifaceted phenomenon that was reinforced by a set of factors derived from diverse contexts, yet working together.

A significant example to illustrate this amalgamation process in the Pamirī Ismaili tradition is the architecture of Pamirī Ismaili houses. For the Pamirī Ismailis, the home is a central space for the performance of rituals and religious practices, including the *qasīda-khonī.*

The Pamirī Ismaili House

The architecture of the Pamirī house is unique and steeped in sacred and religious meanings. Its interior embodies elements of Zoroastrianism, assimilated into and ascribed new meanings connected to Pamirī Ismailism. The central room of the house, which serves both as a living space

[59] Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (New York and London: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2004), 7.
[60] Azim Nanji, *Nizarī Ismaili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (New York: Delmar, 1978), 72-77.
[61] Wladimir Ivanow, "Satpanth (Indian Ismailism)" in *Collectanea*, vol. 1, ed. Wladimir Ivanow (Leiden: Brill 1948), 21-27.

and a place for worship, is divided into several interconnected areas marked out by five wooden pillars. According to pre-Islamic beliefs, the pillars represent the five divine beings or angels (*Yazatas*),[62] known locally as Surush, Mehr, Anahita, Zamyod, and Oraz. Subsequently, their meaning was reinterpreted according to the Shi'ī Ismaili concept of the "five pure bodies" (*panj tan-i pok*), referring to the sacred figures of the Prophet Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn.

The pillar located in the right-hand corner, across the room from the entrance (viewed from the perspective of the entrance), is known locally as *shah-istin/kha-sitan.* It represents Surush, the guardian of conscience and wisdom, and the Prophet Muhammad. The pillar located in the left-hand corner, diagonally across the room from the entrance, which is called *razhsar-istin/voznekh-sitan*, symbolizes Mehr, the guardian of the light of honesty, friendship, and kindness, and 'Ali, the first Imam of the Ismailis. The column to the far left of the entrance, known as *dildung-istin/kitsor-sitan*, stands for Anahita, the guardian of the waters and the spirit of nurturing, and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and the wife of 'Ali. The other two columns to the immediate right and left of the entrance, known as *barkenj-istin/poyga-sitan* and *putrazh-istin/barnekh-sitan*, respectively, symbolize Zamyod, the guardian of the earth and the spirit of productivity, and Oraz, the guardian of fire and the spirit of truthfulness and goodness, as well as Hasan and Husayn, the sons of 'Ali and Fatima. They are joined by a crossbeam to signify the close relationship between the spirits of productivity and goodness, and between the two martyred brothers.

[62] Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

Table 1. Meanings of the Pillars in the Pamirī House[63]

Names of Pillars		Solar System	Indo-Iranian Cosmological (Zoroastrian) Figures	Islamic Holy Figures
Wakhī Language	**Shughni-language**			
Shah-istin	*Kha-sitan*	Sun	Surush	Muhammad
Razhsar-istin	*Vogznekh-sitan*	Moon	Mehr	Ali
Dildung-istin	*Kampir/kisor-sitan*	Venus	Anahita	Fatima
Barkenj-istin	*Pāiga-sitan*	Mercury	Zamyād	Hasan
Putrazh-istin	*Barnekh-sitan*	Jupiter	Āraz	Husayn

The Pamirī Ismaili tradition, known to this day as the "mission of Nāṣir" (*da'wat-i Nosir*) or the "tradition of Nāṣir-i Khusraw" (*Sunnat-i Nosir-i Khusraw*), is primarily centered on the Pamirī household. It consists of an amalgamation of religious customs and practices, including musical performances harmonized with the Fatimid *da'wa.* The tradition of Nāṣir-i Khusraw has also evolved as a result of the challenges it faced throughout history due to upheavals in socio-political life. New ideas and practices were adopted as a result of development in the general Ismaili doctrine caused by internal divisions and external persecution of the Ismailis, especially under Alamut rule in Iran (1090–1256) and in the post-Alamut period (1256 to the present).[64]

The Alamut Period

Although scant evidence exists regarding relations between the Alamut period and the Pamirī Ismaili Muslim community, some sources are illustrative of the doctrinal features prevalent at the height of the Ismaili period Alamut.[65] In the Pamirs, the most important of these books about the Alamut period are *Haft Bob* [The Seven Chapters], *Kalom-i Pīr* [The Book of the Pir], and *Um'ul*

[63] The table is adapted from, Parpisho Qimatshoev, *Sozvezdie strun [Constellation of Strings]* (Khorog: Logos, 2007), 5.

[64] For details on Nizarī Ismailism during the Alamut and post-Alamut periods, see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailīs,* 324-434 and 435-548.

[65] For an example of the doctrinal views of the time, in 1164 on the 17th of Ramadan, the ruler of Alamut, Hasan (d. 561/1166), proclaimed "the great resurrection" (*qiyāma*), which was followed by the abolition of Sharīʿa law and the proclamation of the manifestation of the Imam. See Farhad Daftary, *The Ismāʿīlīs*: *Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 335 and 385-391; and Farhad Daftary, *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London and New York: I.B,Tauris and Co. Ltd, 2005).

Kitob [Mother of the Book].[66] These books have had an impact on the religious life of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims until recent decades. They do not adhere to the Islamic Sharia, do not reference any official Islamic institutions such as *madrasa*s or mosques, and do not call for observing the other formal Islamic rituals. Lacking official institutions and not adhering to the normative Islamic tradition does not mean that the Pamirī Ismailis were not Muslims. They had their practices of dealing with their spiritual and religious needs that, most importantly, were based on the spiritual reality of the Imam of the Time (*Imom-i Zamon*).[67]

The concept of the Imam played, and continues to play, a significant role in every aspect of the people's lives and is the core aspect of their faith. It is expressed through various practices including arts of music, architecture, and dance. Through these expressive forms, the Pamirī Ismailis have harnessed the available tools of philosophical and religious thought, making them amenable to their particular political and cultural environments.[68] This has allowed them to attract several brilliant and creative thinkers and to promote this specific practice of Islam.[69] The success of Ismaili *da'wa* depended solely on religious passion and the enthusiasm of its preachers who successfully employed local practices in their propaganda.

It is likely that Nāṣir-i Khusraw, as an Ismaili preacher working in the region, identified a candidate who was a musician or a good singer, and gradually led him through the various pedagogical stages to understand the esoteric meaning of Ismailism. And so it was through their expressive skills that he approached the masses. He did not reject the conceptual, cultural, and social framework of that

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[66] For details on Pamirī Ismaili literature, see Wladimir Ivanow, *A Guide to Ismaili Literature* (London: Royal Asiatic Society,1933), 89-117.

[67] K. Elchibekov, "Ismailizm na Pamire" in *Istoriya Gorno-Badakhshanskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti: S drevneyshikh vremyon do noveyshego perioda [History of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast: From Ancient Times until Our Times]* (Dushanbe: Payvand, 2005): 452-487.

[68] Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris and Co Ltd, 2002), 7.

[69] Paul E. Walker, *Early Philosophical Shi'ism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani* (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilizations) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

society, but instead introduced his teachings as a natural extension of local belief systems, by blending various practices.

In the 13th century, the Mongols occupied the eastern Islamic world, and the Alamut Ismaili state, which had existed for more than a century, was demolished.[70] From then on, the Ismailis were persecuted throughout the Middle East and Transoxiana. In Ismailī history, this period is called *taqiyya* (a dissimulating way of observing religious practices to escape persecution). According to Daftary, "they [the Ismailīs] not only concealed their beliefs and literature but resorted to Sufi, Twelver Shi'i, Sunni, and Hindu disguises in the midst of hostile surroundings in the Iranian world and Indian subcontinent."[71]

During this time of persecution, many Ismaili *dā'īs* sought refuge in remote places far from the reach of the Mongols. Their doctrine remained hidden and was inaccessible to the majority of their followers for about two centuries. As it has been said above, they were forced to conceal their true beliefs and literature under a variety of sectarian ideas, mostly Sufism and Twelver Shi'ism. Likely, Sufi terms such as *pīr*, *murid, shaykh,* and *murshid* started to appear in Ismailism at that time. Today these terms are commonly used among the Pamirī Ismailis.

The Five Iranian *Dā'īs*

In the Pamirs, there is a story about five Iranian Ismaili *dā'īs*: Shoh Khomush, Shoh Malang, and Shoh Koshon, who settled in Shughnan; and Shoh Qambar Aftob and Shoh Isomuddin, who settled in Wakhan. They likely introduced themselves as *qalandars* [72] because even today, they are remembered by the Pamiris as the "Five *Qalandars*." These *da'ī*s are believed to have descended

[70] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis*, 30-31 and 435; and Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature*, 59.
[71] Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis,* 160.
[72] *Qalandar* originally referred to traveling dervishes unattached to any particular institutional framework. They are wandering ascetic Sufis who may or may not be connected to a specific Sufi order. See John Renard, *Historical Dictionary of Sufism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 189-190; and Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 66-67.

from the Prophet's family, and they were seen as belonging to various Sufi orders. Shoh Khomush, who is believed to be the ancestor of Shughnan's *pīr*s (spiritual guides), and belonging to the Prophet's family through Imam Husayn, was an '*uvaysī*[73] saint from his mother's side. This story was narrated to Bobrinskiy, one of the Russian pioneers of Pamirī studies, by the Shughnanī *pīr* Sayyid Yusuf 'Ali Shoh in 1902.[74]

The presence of these figures and their sectarian identities impacted the religious practices and beliefs of the Pamirī Ismailī Muslims. There were ambiguities and uncertainties in their activities and religious affiliation as they mostly employed Sufi forms of expression to explain their doctrines. Scholars in Ismaili studies describe this trend as "Sufico-Ismaili."[75] The Sufi influence on Pamirī Ismaili practices may be attributed to the work of the *dā'ī*s who arrived in the region and who belonged to the Sufi order.

Furthermore, there was a close relationship between the Ismaili Imams and the Ni'matullāhī Sufis. For example, Imam Shāh Khalīlullāh III (d. 1871) married to the daughter of one of the Ni'matullāhī Sufis of Kirman, Sidq 'Alī Shāh.[76] Imam al-Mustansir billāh II (d. 1480) bore a Sufi name, Shoh Qalandar, and published a book entitled *Pandiyot-i Jawonmardī [Advices of Manliness]*, in which Ismaili Muslims are referred to using common Sufi self-designations, such

[73] '*Uvaysī* is a Sufi doctrine that states that the Sufis do not need to have a living spiritual guide in their quest for God. They claim that they have direct spiritual contact with God. Farīduddīn 'Aṭṭār provides a classic definition of the Uwaysi Sufis as persons without need of a *pīr* since they obtain spiritual "nurturing" directly from the Prophet. Farid al-Din Attar, *Tadhkirat al-Awliya [Memoirs of the Saints],* ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, Part 1 (London and Luzac/Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1905), 24. This particular Sufi order probably takes its name from Uways al-Qaranī, a contemporary of the Prophet, who, according to tradition, accepted Islam without meeting Muhammad and was guided through spiritual communication with him. A.S. Hussaini, "Uways al- Qaranī and the Uwaysi Sufis," *Muslim World* 57 (1967): 103-113. For more information on the '*Uvaysī* Sufism in Central Asia, see Devin DeWeese, *An "Uvaysi" Sufi in Timurid Mawarannahr*, 1-36.

[74] Aleksey Bobrinksoy, "Sekta Ismailiya v Russkikh i Bukharaskikh Predelakh Sredney Azii" ["The Ismaili Sect in the Russian and Bukharian Territories of Cental Asia"], *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie 1 [Ethnographic Review]*, Moscow (1902): 1-20.

[75] Wladimir Ivanow, *Ismaili Literature: A Biographical Survey*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Ismaili Society, 1963), 11.

[76] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis*, 503.

as "the people of the truth" (*ahl-i haqīqat*) and the Imam is designated as a *pīr* or *murshid*.[77] As religious texts of this nature spread and gained influence, missionaries also expressed elements of Sufi and Twelver Shi'i ideas that entered the oral and written traditions of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims, and are prevalent even today.

The *Charoghrawshan* Ritual

Let us consider the *charoghrawshan* (literally, 'to light a candle'), a ritual performed on the second day of the funeral ceremonies in the Pamirs. This ceremony consists of the recitation of a text called *Qandil-noma* or *Charogh-noma* during the preparation of the candle wick made of cotton. Then the *khalīfa* (local religious leader) lights the candle and continues to recite the *Charogh-noma*. After completing the *charoghrawshan* ceremony, the *qasīda-khonī* performance starts. The text of the *Qandil-noma* consists of certain Qur'anic verses and several religious lyrics in Persian.[78] Since no standardized rendition of the *charoghrawshan* exists, there are divergent views regarding its authorship and its performance during ceremonies. Shohkhumorov emphasizes that the *charoghrawshan* is a remnant from the practices of *mehrparastī* (a pre-Islamic practice of worshiping the sun and the moon) that was widespread in the Pamirs, and later took on an Islamic shape during the time of Nāṣir-i Khusraw.[79] Bertel's, a Russian scholar, argues that the *Qandil-noma* may have been the work of Shāh Ni'matullāhī Walī (d. 1431), an Iranian Sufi,[80] on the basis of a *munājāt* (collection of intimate prayers to God), included in the text of the *Qandil-noma* that

[77] Al-Mustanṣir bi'llāh II, *Pandiyot-i Jawonmardī [Advices on Manliness]*, ed. and trans. Wladimir Ivanow (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 2–3, 11, 13, 14 and 34-36.
[78] Hakim Elnazarov, "Chiragh-i Rawshan," in *Encyclopaedia Islamica,* eds. Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary (Brill Online, 2015). Accessed online on September 17, 2015), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-islamica/chiragh-i-rawshan-COM_05000087.
[79] Abusaid Shohkhumorov, "Charoghrushan –sunnat-i oriyoyī va Ismoilī-i mardum-i Badakhshon " ["Charaghrushan an Arian and Ismaili custom of the people of Badakhshan"] in *Mas'alaho-yi Pomirshinosī, [Issues of the Pamir Studies]* 5 (Dushanbe: Donish, 2003):149-150.
[80] A.E. Bertel's, "Nazariyot-i barkhe az urafo va shi'iyon-i isnoasharī roje' ba arzish-i meros-i adabī-i Nosir-i Khusraw" ["The view of some scholars and Twelver Shi'ites on the value of the literary tradition of Nasir-i Khusraw"] in *Yodnoma-i Nosir-i Khusraw, [Memoirs of Nasir Khusraw]* (Mashhad: publisher missing, 1976), 107-108. For Ni'matullāhī Sufism, see Terry Graham, "Shāh Ni'matullāhī Walī: Founder of the Ni'matullāhī Sufī order" in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufis (1150-1500)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 173-190.

was written by the same person. In Badakhshan, the *Qandil-noma* is attributed to Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Shohkhumorov considers the point made by Bertel's invalid because he assumes that there are many versions of the text in the Pamir region, and he believes that the texts are modified according to the wishes of the *Imom-i Zamon* (the ever-present Imam).[81]

Concerning the various versions of the *Qandil-noma, Khalīfa* Mamadbek[82] from Yamg Village in Wakhan recited some lines from an old rendering of the text to me, which references Twelver Shi'ism:

> *In Charogh az Jabbor-i olam ba Muhammad (c) omad, az Muhammad (c) ba Ali (a) omad, az 'Ali(a) ba duwozdah Imom omad, az duwozdah Imom ba Hazrat-i Sulton-al-Orifin va Burhonulmuhaqiqīn, Amīr-i Amīron Amīr Sulton Sayyid Shoh Nosir-i Khusraw omad, silsila bo silsila yodgor boqī khohad mond.*[83]
>
> This light came from Allāh to Muhammad, from Muhammad to Ali, from AlI to the Twelve Imams, from the Twelve Imams to Hazrat-i Sultān-al-ʿĀrifīn and Burhān al-Muhaqiqīn, the king of kings Sultan Sayyid Shah Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and continues over generation forever.

The text of the *Qandil-noma* has recently been edited by Faqir Muhammad Hunzai at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, as Ismaili rites and practices are modified under the instruction of the current Ismaili religious institutions, that is under the patronage of the present Imam. The relationship between Ismailism, Persian Sufism, and many other spiritual practices in the region has led to close associations between the various practices considered today to be Pamirī Ismaili practices. Many Persian-speaking poets and philosophers, such as Ṣanā'ī, 'Aṭṭār, and Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī/Rūmī, are considered by Pamirī Ismaili as their co-religionists.[84] Ismaili Muslims in the Pamirs preserved the works of these mystic poets, and today they function as an essential part of Pamirī religious practices. On various religious occasions, poems by these mystics are recited as

[81] A. Shohkhumorov, "Svyashenaya Lampada" ["The Sacred Lamp"] in *Nosir-i Khusraw: diruz, imruz, fardo [Nasir Khusraw, Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow]*, ed. S. Niyozov and R. Nazariev (Khujand: Noshir, 2005), 656-670.
[82] A *khalīfa* a local religious leader responsible for religious ceremonies.
[83] Mamadbekov Mamadbek, interview, November 2011. Yamg Village, Wakhan.
[84] Farhad Daftary, *Ismaili Literature,* 67.

part of the esoteric Pamirī Ismaili tradition today. The confluence of identities expressed in the compound phrase "Pamirī Ismaili" can be understood as resulting from this ecumenical outlook, which combines multiple motifs and ideas from pre-Islamic Pamirī rituals and beliefs reinterpreted with Islamic content. The Fatimid *da'wa* (i.e., Nāṣir-i Khusraw's teachings), the Alamut and post-Alamut *taqiyya* and the Sufi ideas that are performed today as part of rituals and practices which are collectively called Pamirī Ismailism or the *Panjtanī* faith.[85] *Panjtanī* has emerged as a marker of identity for the Pamirī Ismailis, employed to distinguish themselves from the *Choryorī*s, a term used by the Pamiri Ismailis and the Sunnis to refer to the Sunnī Muslims in Tajikistan.[86]

The construction of religious identity and the formation of the Pamirī Ismailis' spiritual practices may be described as a gradual process that began when people came into contact with external agents with their own ideological identities and their responses to the local context. This process continues to this day, as Pamirī Ismailis have been forced to redefine their identity, in the face of new and evolving formal institutional, political, social, and cultural forces.

Soviet Rule in Tajikistan: Restrictions on Religious Observance and their Consequences

The Pamir region remained undeveloped until the establishment of Soviet rule in the area which today includes Tajikistan, in 1920. The economy of the region was, and continues to be, dependent on animal farming and agriculture. The region had no *madrasas* or mosques and only a few home-based private schools in which very few people had the chance to study. Therefore, the majority of the people were illiterate, and the region was economically weak.[87] This was partially due to the lack of roads and only very narrow and dangerous passes, resulting in the area remaining almost

[85] Abdulmamad Iloliev, *The Ismaili-Sufi Sage of Pamir*, 36-52.
[86] Hakim Elnazarov and Sultonbek Aksakolov, "The Nizari Ismailis of Central Asia in Modern Times" in *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011) 45-76, 66.
[87] Bahadur Iskandarov, *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie i politicheskie aspekty istorii Pamirskikh Knyazhestv: XV – pervaya polovina XIX veka* [Socio-Economic and Political Aspects of History of Pamiri Principalities: XV – first half of XIX century] (Dushanbe: Donish, 1983), 25.

inaccessible to the outside world. This inaccessibility, however, was essential to the preservation of various languages and cultural practices that were thriving.

The first contact between the region and Europe began in the late nineteenth century during the "Great Game," a military and political race between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia. This "game" worsened the situation leading the region to become dominated by the Afghan troops of ʻAbduraḥmān Ḵẖān̲ (d. 1901). He spread fear and terror in the region, with the people of Badakhshan suffering both political and sectarian persecution at the hands of Sunni Afghans because of their Shiʻa Ismaili faith.[88] The fear and terror continued until the Russian Empire occupied the region, and, in agreement with Britain, divided the area into Russia-dominated and Afghan Badakhshan. This division continued along ethnic or ethnonational lines in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. It is from that period that the term "Pamirī" emerged to refer to people who live in the Pamir Mountains and were recognized as an ethnoreligious group distinct from the population of other parts of the region.

The Soviet government modified the region's economic infrastructure and provided the area with autonomous status. In the period after the Second World War, the region was transformed into one of the most prosperous regions of the USSR. Various educational institutions were established, such as primary and secondary schools, universities, research centers such as the Tajik Academy of Sciences. The research centers inside Soviet Tajikistan and elsewhere in the Soviet Union performed their strategic plans through ethnography, and this played a crucial role in creating new forms of national and cultural identities. All of these educational and academic institutions, however, also promoted the view and agenda of the communist government's anti-religious, atheistic policy, and all of them were under strict government control. This resulted, in particular,

[88] Abdulmamad Iloliev, *The Ismaili-Sufi Sage of Pamir: Muborak-i Wakhani and the Esoteric Tradition of the Pamirī Muslims* (Amherst and New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 2.

in restrictions against studying religion and religious topics. All spiritual practices were considered as “noxious relics of the past” and were officially sidelined. As the *qasīda-khonī* performance was one of the more important religious practices in Badakhshan, it came under particular attack by the communist government. Several performers have reported that men who were involved in this practice were jailed, fined, or dismissed from their daytime jobs. Hence, one of the questions that underlie this study is, how the practice was preserved and how it survived suppression by the anti-religious Soviet regime. The historical context of the religious practices of the people and their relationship to the practice of the *qasīda-khonī* requires assessment to establish an accurate image of the *qasīda-khonī* of the Soviet times as an index of expressing Pamirī Ismaili identity, which is presented in the following section.

The *Panj Tanī* Faith

As noted earlier, the combination of Ismaili, Twelver Shi'i, and Sufi elements merged with local practices and progressively framed the indigenous religious belief and practice known as *Panjtanī* (the Fivers), a term which until very recently was an assertion of religious identity for Pamirī Ismailis.[89] With the establishment of global Ismaili religious institutions in the region, the term *Ismaili* or *Pamirī Ismaili* is frequently used than *panjtanī.* Although various practices are part of this religious belief, the central purpose of this practice, is the continuation of the spiritual authority of the Imam, who is believed to be from the family of the *Panj Tan-i Pok* (the Five Pure Bodies, i.e., Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn.

A vital feature typical of this *Panjtanī* faith is the shrine culture of the region. Shrine visitation and saint veneration constitute the essential elements of *Panjtanī* religious-cultural practice and consists of three categories. The first category is imaginary shrines in a particular place, where saints are believed to have performed certain kinds of miracles. This category includes veneration of saints such as Ali, his wife Fatima, his horse DulDul, Imom Zayn al-'Ābidin (d. 714), Imom Mustanṣir, Imom Muḥammad Bāqir (d. 732), and Nāṣir-i Khusraw. The second category of saintly persons venerated at particular places includes *dā'īs*, mentioned earlier in this chapter. The third category comprises local *pīrs;* their houses; and the *farmon-khona* (the house of orders), a place where instructions (*farmon*) of the Imams, their pictures, the Qur'an, and specific Ismaili books are kept.[90]

[89] Abdulmamad Iloliev, "Mubarak Wakhanī's Intellectual Contribution to Nasir Khusraw's tradition in Pamir" in *Nosiri Khusrav: diruz, imruz, fardo [Nasir Khusraw: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow]*, ed. Sarfaroz Niyozov and Ramazon Nazariev (Khujand: Noshir, 2005), 611-619.

[90] Abdulmamad Iloliev, "Popular Culture and Religious Metaphor: Saints and Shrines in Wakhan Region of Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 27 (2008): 64, last accessed on March 20, 2013, doi:10.1080/02634930802213924; and John Mock, "Shrine Traditions of Wakhan Afghanistan," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 4 (2) (2011): 117-145, last accessed on March 24, 2014, doi:10.1163/187471611X600350.

Qasīda-khonī as part of the Pamirī Ismaili religious practice is a remarkable example of how diverse practices have combined to form an indigenous practice, in which music is being employed as an alternative method of worship and devotion for expressing religiosity and spirituality.

The Network of "Pirship" and its Influence on *Qasīda-Khonī*

Along with the *Panjtanī* faith, the network of "pirship" is the other mainstay of Pamirī Ismaili's religious practice.[91] This network, as a formal institution, began in relation to the doctrine of the Imamate. It served to implement the guidance and management of the authority of the Imam in his absence and contributed towards shaping the community's local religious identity. In Badakhshan, the Pamirī Ismaili religion was managed by a local network, which Iloliev refers to as the "network of pirship" that includes *pīr*s and *khalīfa*s.[92] This network continues till today. From this network, however, Iloliev excludes the performers and *qasīda-khonī* itself, who have played as important a role as the *pīr*s and *khalīfa*s in the religious lives of the Pamirī Ismailis. Some of the *pīr*s and a number of the *khalīfa*s were, in fact, themselves performers of *qasīda-khonī*. Even when they did not perform or sing, they played a significant role in interpreting the content of the lyrics for the participants or promoting and supporting the *qasīda-khon*s. For instance, Mamadsho, a late 19th-century *qasīda-khon* from the Ghund valley of Shughnan was invited to a gathering organized by *pīr* Said Yusuf Alisho in Tem village, near the city of Khorog. His performance was remarkable and was received with great respect by the participants and the *pīr.* Before departing for his village, the *pīr* rewarded Mamadsho with a horse.[93]

[91] Abdulmamad Iloliev, "Pirship in Badakhshan: The Role and Significance of the Institute of the Religious Masters (Pirs) in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Wakhan and Shughnan," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 6 (2) (2013): 155-175; last accessed on July 23, 2013; doi:10.1353/isl.2013.0010.
[92] Ibid., 156.
[93] Haidarmamad Tawakkalov, *An'ana-yi madhiyasaroi dar Badakhshon* [Tradition of Singing *madhiya* in Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Donish, 2006), 34-35.

Therefore, in talking about the institutional networks in the Pamirī Ismaili context, I focus on the performers of *qasīda-khonī*, as they are active actors, and not the *pīrs,* whose social functions ended when the modern global Ismaili institution was founded.

According to Ismaili doctrine, the religious network consists of seven ranks: (1) Imam (the leader of all Ismailis); (2) *hujjat* (the Imam's proof); (3) *da'i* (missionary); (4) *pīr* or *ma'dhūn-i akbar* (the senior licentiate who has the right to convey the commands of the *da'i*): (5) *ma'dhūn-i asghar* (the junior licentiate) or *khalīfa* (the *pīr*'s deputy who has the right to propagate in the absence of *pīr*s); (6) *mustajīb* (a novice who does not have the authority to preach); and (7) *murīd* (the ordinary believer).[94]

The institution of *pir*ship emerged as a developed network based on religious and socio-economic relationships between the *murīd,* and the *pīr*s.[95] The spiritual and socio-economic authority of the *pīrs* was based on the Ismaili doctrine of the Imamate. Since the Imam was inaccessible physically, his orders and instructions were carried out by the *pīr*s.[96] This network of pirship seems to have had very close connections with the musicians of the region in helping them to sustain their institution's mission. These musicians were great promoters of the *qasīda-khonī.* A number of *pīr*s also were great singers or performers of the *qasīda-khonī* tradition. *Qasīda-khonī* performers were considered second only to the *khalīfas* in the hierarchical system for promoting the Ismaili faith. Therefore, at *pīr*s' courts, competitions were organized in which great *qasīda-khonī* performers gathered and were highly rewarded for their performances. As I noted above, *qasīda-khon*

[94] Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, 230-232; and Abbas Hamdani, "Evolution of the Organizational Structure of the Fatimi Da'wa," *Arabian Studies* 3 (1976): 85-114.
[95] Iloliev, "Pirship in Badakhshan," 158-159.
[96] Qudratbek Elchibekov, "Ismailism na Pamirī" [Ismailism in the Pamirs] in *Istoriya Gorno-Badakhshanskoi avtonomnoi oblasti [History of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast]*, Vol. 1: *s drevneishikh vremen do noveishego perioda [from ancient times until our times]* (Dushanbe: Paivand, 2005), 452-487.

Mamadsho was awarded a horse, with all the necessary riding equipment, for his brilliant performance by his *pīr* Sayyid Yusuf Alishoh.[97]

Bobrinskiy notes that the entire region of Badakhshan was divided into several religious estates that had their *pīr*s and *khalīfa*s. The *pīr*s controlled the lives of the people in the Pamirs, and it was their obligation to interpret the doctrinal principles of religion and to give instructions to their *murīd*s concerning religious rituals and how to conduct their personal lives.[98] The *qasīda-khonī* performers worked and were instructed under the *pīr*s guidance. As the *pīr*s usually came from literate families, they provided the performers with the lyrics, which the latter then performed in gatherings.[99]

Since the *pīr*s were considered to be representatives of the Imam of the Time *(Imom-i Zamon*), the Pamirī Ismailis worshipped and adored the *pīr*s and the Imam in the same way. This phenomenon is noticeably expressed in literary works of local poets and the repertoire of *qasīda-khonī* performers. The following poem, which was written by a local poet named Rubobī, explains the association of the Imam and the *pīr*. It is performed often during *qasīda-khonī* performances:

> *Gul-e ki rawnaq-i buston-i dīn dar chaman ast,*
> *Nigīn-i khotam-i sulton-i dīn Abul-Hasan ast.*
> *Shaho ba dargoh-i tu rū-yi iltijo oram*
> *Ba juz dar tu pahno-i digar kujo oram.*
> *Manam ki dast ba domon-i Shoh Navo doram*
> *Ba sha'n-i marhamatu ism-i pok-i muhtaramat.*[100]
>
> The flower that is the shine of religion's garden,
> The seal-ring of the religion's king is Abul-Hasan.
> O king, towards your court I turn my face in plea.
> Where am I to seek protection other than your court.
> I am who is holding the skirt of Shoh Navo.

[97] Haidarmamad Tavakkalov, *Traditsiya Ispolneniye Madhiya v Badakhshane* [Tradition of Performing *madhiya* in Badakhshan] (PhD dissertation, Akademiya Nauk Tajikistana, 2006), 31.
[98] Aleksey Bobrinksiy, "Sekta Ismailiya v Russkikh i Bukharskikh Predelakh Sredney Azii," 10-12.
[99] Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz, Wakhan.
[100] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz, Wakhan.

Through your grace and your pure name.

In the verses above, the poet praises Shoh Navo, a *pīr* during the Imamate of the 44th Imam of the Ismailis Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī (d. 1792) and seeks protection and help from him. Similarly, respect and admiration were shown to the *khalīfas* because, in many instances, they were substitutes for the *pīrs*. They played a central role in religious and spiritual ceremonies and were involved in performing and interpreting the *qasīda-khonī* on some occasions. This network was very influential until the Russians took control of the region in 1895. The *pīr*s wanted to voluntarily join the Russian Empire and later expressed their willingness to assist the Soviet government in fighting for the eradication of illiteracy and ignorance among the Pamirīs that they had suffered much under the oppressive rule of the Sunni Afghans.[101] However, this close relationship with the new rulers and in return, the authority of the *pīr*s, did not long-lived. The Soviets suspected that the *pīrs* were agents of the British Empire and were, therefore, presumed to be conspiring to create an independent state under the protection of Britain. This suspicion resulted in the persecution of the most influential *pīrs*, Sayyid Yusuf Alishoh, and Sayyid Farrukhshoh.[102]

The Soviet repression of the local *pīrs* coincided with an attempt at religious reform in the Pamirs, undertaken by the Aga Khan III (d. 1957). In 1923, the Imam of the Time sent the *dāʿī*s Sabzalī Rawshanalī and Sayyid Munīr to the region. They attempted to reform some of the local religious traditions, especially the Nāṣir-i Khusraw tradition. However, the mission of these *dāʿī*s failed, and the Imam of the Time then issued an order for the Pamirī Ismailis to follow their traditional rites.[103]

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[101] Elbon Hojibekov, *Ismailitskie Dukhovnie Nastavniki (piri) i ikh rol v obshestvenno-politicheskoy I kulturnoy zhizni Shughnana (vtoraya polovina XIX – 30 godi XX vv* [The Ismaili spiritual leaders (pirs) and their role in socio-political and cultural life in Shugnan (second half of XIX – 1930s of XX centuries)] (PhD dissertation, The Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, 2002).
[102] L.N. Kharyukov, *Anglo-Russkoye sopernichestvo v Zentralnoi Azii i Ismailizm [Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Cental Asia and Ismailism]* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo MGU, 1995), 121.
[103] Abusaid Shokhumorov, "Charoghrushan – sunnat-i oriyoyī va ismoilī-yi mardum-i Badakhshan," 153–154.

At the beginning of 1928, *pīr*s and *khalīfa*s were deprived of their civil voting rights in village council elections by the Soviet authorities. This was followed by physical repression of the *pīr*s; some of them were arrested while others fled the Soviet Pamirs for Afghanistan.[104] However, repression by the state did not affect the authority of the *pīr*s or the believers' adherence to them. While located on the opposite bank of the Panj River[105] (i.e., in Afghanistan), the *pīr*s and *khalīfa*s maintained contact with their *murīd*s and were informed about the events on the other side of the river (i.e., in Tajikistan). Despite this situation, Pamirī Ismailis had contact with their supreme spiritual leader, Aga Khan III, who resided in Bombay in British India. This situation worried the Soviets, and they decided to close the border tight between Tajik and Afghan Badakhshan in 1936, which led to an almost complete separation of families and spiritual-religious leaders and the *pīr*s from their *murīd*s.[106] This led to the creation of new identities, namely, the so-called *shuravī* "the Soviets," referring to Pamirī Ismailis living in Tajikistan on the one hand and *avghon* "the Afghans" referring to the people in Afghanistan's Badakhshan on the other side.

The Soviets implemented an anti-religious ideology. They had strict control over all institutions, and they restricted the study of religion and its practice.[107] The propaganda became more aggressive, and Ismaili doctrine was proclaimed to be the source of darkness, bigotry, and an anti-scientific worldview. Therefore, religious practice went underground and was performed in secret.[108]

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[104] Abusaid Shokhumorov, *Razdeleniye Badakhshana i sud'bi ismailizma [Division of Badakhshan and the Fate of Ismailism]* (Moscow: Nauka, 2008), 93–97.
[105] A river in the Pamirs that divides Tajik Badakhshan from Afghan Badakhshan. During the period of the Great Game, the river was used as a line to mark the division of the Pamir into two parts.
[106] Tohir Kalandarov, *Shugnantsi: istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie [The Shugnanis: A Historico-ethnographical Study]* (Moscow: Nauka, 2004), 8–10.
[107] Dimitri Mikoulski, "The Study of Islam in Russia and the Former Soviet Union: An Overview" in *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change*, ed. Azim Nanji (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 94-107.
[108] Saidanvar Shokhumorov, "Ismailiti: Traditsii i sovremennost," 128-132.

After the structure of the *pīr*ship in the GBAO was weakened, the only actors that remained in the religious sphere were the *khalīfa*s and the performers of *qasīda-khonī.* These practitioners, including the *khalīfa*s through their practices of the *qasīda-khonī,* contributed to sustaining the religious identity of the Pamirī Ismailis and protecting their faith against political repression, even as they were always persecuted. They operated autonomously and did not submit to the Spiritual Administration of Sunni Muslims of Central Asia. In the 1960s, the Soviet Union's Council of Ministers established a ruling body for religious affairs and sent its authorized representatives to all the republics and regional executive committees, including those in Badakhshan. Under the new regulations, "official" *khalīfa*s were appointed to each village council and worked according to the rules and policies of the Soviet government.[109]

Ismailism in Independent Tajikistan

The political upheaval that took place in the Soviet Union between 1985 and 1991 affected all Central Asian Soviet Republics. The soviet system eventually collapsed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the processes of religious revival became intense in the newly independent states of Central Asia. The sovereign states began to legitimize major religious institutions, which increased numbers of official Muslim believers in Tajikistan.[110] Communist doctrine finally collapsed, and a large part of the society turned to religion as a "new ideology" relevant to the history and customs of their respective regions. Also, Tajik Muslim believers obtained the opportunity to communicate freely with the rest of the Muslim world and got access to the information and financial support needed to restore forms of Islamic religious life. All of these developments resulted in the growth of political interest in the religion and ambitions of religious leaders. This resulted in the

[109] Abusaid Shokhumorov, *Razdeleniye Badakhshana i Sud'bi Ismailizma*, 103.
[110] Paul Froese, "After Atheism: An Analysis of Religious Monopolies in the Post-Communist World," *Sociology of Religion* 65:1 (2004): 57, accessed July 28, 2013, doi:10.2307/3712507.

establishment of the Islamic Renaissance Party in Tajikistan in 1991.[111] In the backdrop of these political transformations in Tajikistan, a new historical period began for the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims which can be divided into two phases: the first started in the late 1980s and continued until 1995 (prior to the visit of the Aga Khan IV), while the second phase continues from 1995 to the present (since the visit of the Aga Khan IV).

Religious Revival and the Civil War

Religious revival in the Pamirs primarily resulted in the restoration of destroyed or desecrated places of worship, mainly shrines. For the Pamirī Ismailis, these places are sacred, and they call them *joyho-yi muqaddas* ("holy places"). The people in the Pamirs believe that these "holy places" protect them from danger, misfortunes and heal various diseases caused by evil spirits when they offer prayers in these places. In the Soviet times, many holy sites were abandoned, with only elders daring to worship in secret. Since the late 1980s, however, the significance of these sacred places has been revived, and they have become permanent places of pilgrimage, as people increasingly turn to them for healing and spiritual protection. The procedure for restoration and reconstruction was almost identical throughout the region. The villagers collected funds and materials and men voluntarily participated in the reconstruction, usually one person from each household. During the re-inauguration ceremonies, food was distributed as a charity (*khudoyī).*

Opening ceremonies were often attended by state officials of the region and *pīr*s from neighboring Afghanistan, who had fled their home during the repressive Soviet era. Gradually, religious renaissance spread from the local to the regional and national levels and acquired a political character. An organization named *Nosir-i Khusraw* emerged in Dushanbe in 1990, led by a Pamirī Ismaili, Khudoyberdi Kholiqnazarov. This organization engaged in educational activities for the

[111] Muhiddin Kabiri, "Guftugu-yi Davlat-u Din dar Tojikiston," [Dialogue between State and Religion in Tajikistan] in *Gosudarstvo i religiia: poisk puteĭ prodolzheniia dialoga [State and Religion: Search of ways for continuing dialogue]*, ed. Pulat Shozimov and Rustam Khaidarov (Dushanbe: Irfon, 2005), 25–63.

benefit of the Ismailis in Tajikistan and had the following objectives: building houses for prayer (*jamoat-khonas*) in Dushanbe and other cities of the country with Pamirī Ismaili populations; providing assistance to Pamirī Ismailis in maintaining their religious customs and the moral upbringing of the younger generation; publication and distribution of religious Ismaili literature; and promote the socio-economic development in the region.[112] The *Nosir-i Khusraw* organization received financial support from the leader of another organization called *Qonun-i Nosir-i Khusraw* established by Sayed Mansur Naderī of Afghanistan for supporting the Ismailis in Afghanistan.[113]

The *Nosir-i Khusraw* organization had a healthy relationship with the Sunni Muslim leadership in Tajikistan, the institution of *qoziyot*, and participated in various religious activities conducted under their direction. For example, the leader of the Sunni Muslims of Tajikistan, Akbar Turajonzoda, visited Badakhshan and took part in the opening ceremony of a shrine in Roshtqala in the Pamirs, where he was given a magnificent reception organized by the leaders of *Nosir-i Khusraw*.[114]

The most pressing need for the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims, however, was to establish contact with their spiritual leader, the Aga Khan IV. In the summer of 1990, two scholars, Dr. Bishop and Dr. Akiner from the London School of Oriental and African Studies, visited Tajikistan to research Ismaili Muslim society in the country. These scholars met with Dr. Khayolbek Dodikhudoev, a leading authority on Ismaili studies in Tajikistan. In September of the same year, Dodikhudoev's interview with the British scholars was published in the regional newspaper *Badakhshon-i Sovetī* [Soviet Badakhshan]. This interview was the first piece of information the Pamirī Ismailis had received in decades about the life of their Imam, the Aga Khan IV. The interview angered the

[112] Qudratbek Elchibekov, "Tashkilot-i Nosir-i Khusraw," [The organisation of *Nasir-i Khusraw*], *Badakhshon-i Sovetī [Soviet Badakhshan],* March 7, 1992.
[113] Sobir Nasimov, "Darkhast ba mardumi Tojik," [A request from the Tajik people], *Jumhuriyat [Republic],* January 1, 1992.
[114] Mirzo Sangmamadov, interview, November 2011, Khorog.

central body of the Communist Party, which announced that the published interview had religious content and was,thus considered to be an "illegal publication."[115]

In March 1991, Dr. Alimamad-i Rajput, a member of staff of the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, visited Dushanbe on his initiative. In the summer of that same year, a group of three persons from the Institute of Ismaili Studies – Dr. Saidjalal Badakhshani, Dr. Alimamad-i Rajput and Dr. Rafiq Kashevji – obtained permission from Moscow to travel to the Pamir region on a private visit. They represented the Aga Khan IV during their visit to the Pamirs and became acquainted with the activities of the Pamirī Ismaili community, their religious practices, literature, history, and culture. They discussed the prospects for economic and cultural cooperation with Ismaili Muslim leaders worldwide. The delegation visited all parts of the Pamirs, which previously had been closed to foreigners. They were guided by the head of *Nosir-i Khusraw* and officials of the local administration.[116] Following the visit, a spiritual rapprochement of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims with their Imam became possible. In August of the same year, leaders of the region and the Republic of Tajikistan sent an official letter to the Aga Khan IV with an invitation to visit Tajikistan and the Pamirs.

The situation changed dramatically with the outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan in 1992. The Pamirs became a besieged territory, and the main transportation route that connected it with other parts of Tajikistan and the rest of the world ceased to function. As a result, the population of the Pamirs faced a critical shortage of food and necessary supplies. Zarifmo Aslamshoeva, who was employed as a reporter for a regional television station at that time, describes that moment:

> *... the USSR collapsed. Winter came. So did civil war. My remote corner of the world first turned chaotic; then the chaos cut us off nearly completely from the outside. I had visions of my two children starving. Then, one snowy night, I was called to the TV station to broadcast the most important words of my career and, perhaps, my life.*

[115]Abudsaid Shokhumorov, *Razdelenie Badakhshana i sud'by Ismailizma,* 107-108.
[116] Ibid., 109.

> *The studio was very cold. The engineers told me I'd have to wait for two hours for the electricity to be restored. While I was waiting, I went over the announcement. Only then I did realize, it was a letter from the Aga Khan Foundation, a letter telling people not to give up hope, aid is on the way. I don't know how to describe it. I wish there were words to express the feelings. I moved closer to the window. The snow was falling, but I didn't feel the winter anymore. I knew spring was coming. My children, my neighbours and I wouldn't starve. This group, sponsored and inspired by that man, a man I had only known through memories of my grandmother, had saved us.*[117]

In this challenging time, significant support was provided by the Aga Khan organizations. In the middle of 1993, these organizations opened an office in Khorog and initiated the Pamir Relief and Development Programme (PRDP), and immediately organized the delivery of humanitarian aid to the region. Food and other goods were received in the Pamirs and then distributed to residents, regardless of ethnicity, race or religion.

In the autumn of 1993, Qozidavlat Qoimdodov, an Ismaili from Shughnan district, who was a Member of Parliament in the new government of Tajikistan, made an official visit to Geneva, where the head office of the Aga Khan Foundation is situated. He introduced the Imam to the complex socio-economic and political situation in the Pamirs and the Republic of Tajikistan as a whole and conveyed a personal invitation message from President Emomali Rahmonov (now Emomali Rahmon) to visit Tajikistan. Qoimdodov's second meeting with the Imam occurred on May 1994 in Paris, when he represented Tajikistan in meetings with representatives of the Aga Khan Foundation from other countries.[118]

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[117] Zarifmo Aslamshoyeva, April 17, 2008 (01:56 PM ET) "Aga Khan – My Grandma's Dream," Anderson Cooper 360° Blog; last accessed on March 23, 2013, http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2008/04/17/aga-khan-my-grandma%e2%80%99s-dream/

[118] Qozidavlat Qoimdodov, *Didor* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1994), 4-5.

Aga Khan IV's Visit to the Pamirs and the Institutionalization of Ismailism

Regular private and official visits from leaders of the Pamirs, including intellectuals and scientists, to the residence of the Imam, the Institute of Ismaili Studies, and the Ismaili Centre in London, prepared the way for the future visit of the Aga Khan IV to the Pamirs in May 1995. It was the first-ever visit of a spiritual leader of the Pamirī Ismailis to the region and provided a great opportunity to local followers for personal contact with their Imam. Previously it was only possible for a small number of *pīr*s and *khalīfa*s, who traveled thousands of kilometers across difficult and unsafe terrains to be granted with a *didor*. *Didor* is an essential concept in the Ismaili spiritual tradition; it is manifested at the moment when Ismailis find themselves in the presence of the Imam of the Time (a present and living Imam) physically in organized congregation and are able to receive his blessings. There are two possible means of attaining *dīdor*: physical (*zohirī didor*) and spiritual (*botinī didor*). One implies a live encounter with the Imam, and the other, the attainment of enlightenment and spiritual empowerment through religious and devotional practices.

The journey was considered equal to the pilgrimage to Mecca. For ordinary *murīd*s, the pain of longing for their distant Imam had never left their hearts, even as they held a strong belief that the Imam was always present in their thoughts and memory. They conveyed those memories to younger generations through stories, legends, and practices, in particular through *qasīda-khonī*. Zarifmo narrates her own experience of how she carried and experienced that memory throughout her life:

> *When I was growing up, my grandma and her friends in my tiny village Boziqala, and villages nearby, knew little about the world. They didn't have much education and never traveled beyond their province, the Pamir. Their children and grandchildren, though, were well educated. It made them proud. My grandma said, before the Soviet Union it was easier to get messages from the Imam, but now we are disconnected. She used to blame the government, sometimes. But most of the time she blamed people for not remembering God. I loved sitting next to my grandma when she was praying because, at the end of her prayers, she used to shake my hand*

> *saying shoh-i didor.*[119] *My brothers and I fought over who would sit closer to her to hear the shoh-i didor. There was a special sacred place in the corner of our house where my grandma used to sit during her evening prayers. That's all I knew about the Aga Khan while growing up. Once, though, in college, I heard one Pamirī professor being asked why Pamirīs pay so much attention to education. And his answer: "It's a wish of their Imam."*[120]

The Aga Khan IV's visit to Tajikistan lasted from May 24-28 1995 and included both official engagements and *didor* with his *murīd*s. The first *didor* took place on May 25, 1995, in Shugnan and Roshtqala, then on May 26 in Murghab district and Ghund valley, and May 27 in the Ishkashim and Rushan districts. These events are commemorated today, and celebrated in different parts of the Pamirs; May 25 is celebrated as the Day of Light (*Ruz-i Nur*) in the Pamirī Ismaili calendar. The Aga Khan IV, speaking to his *murīd*s, announced several essential principles that should serve to guide all Ismaili Muslims in their life. The emphasis was to use their intellect to achieve their ends in both spiritual and material aspects of their lives: everyone should live and work honestly and contribute to the development of their country, wherever they lived and worked; to live in peace and harmony with all members of society regardless of race, religion, nationality, or language; to forgive each other's past mistakes and offences; not to encroach on the lives of others; to give back good for evil; to help the poor; to respect the laws of their own and other countries; to pay attention to the education and training of children and promote the development of their minds; and to learn English, the language of international communication, in order to establish and develop contacts with the more developed countries.[121]

The sermons of the Imam, as a system of moral values, were recognized as a regulator of the Pamirī Ismaili public and private life by the population of the region. In a sense, this visit in May 1995 put

[119] *shoh-i didor*, a prayer for an audience with the Imam
[120] Aslamshoyeva, "Aga Khan – My Grandma's Dream."
[121] From *farmans* (sermons) of the Aga Khan IV issued in 1995-1997, obtained from Ismailī Religious Education Committee office in Dushanbe, October 2011.

an end to the crisis of Pamirī identity by transforming its underpinnings from the ethnic to the confessional, thus removing the severity of the Tajik–Pamir confrontation that occurred during the Civil War. In the new pursuit of unity, *qasīda-khonī* plays a significant role even today. As a musical genre it contributes to the building of a shared national cultural heritage. I will elaborate more on this aspect of national culture-making in later chapters.

The New Institutionalization of Pamirī Ismaili Religious Practices

The existence of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Ismaili Tariqah Religious Education Board (ITREB) with its subsection committee, the Ismaili Tariqah Religious Education Committee (ITREC), which was established before the ITREB in the Pamirs in 1995. It was closely associated and monitored by the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London. The scope of its mandate was all matters relating to the religious life and education of the Pamirī Ismailis and has led to significant reforms not only in spiritual life but in the social, economic, and cultural experiences of the Pamirī Ismailis. It should be noted that ITREB, a global Ismaili religious institution within the broader framework of Aga Khan institutions, is involved in social and spiritual matters that relate only to Ismaili Muslims worldwide, whereas the AKDN is a private, international, and non-denominational developmental organization that works to improve the welfare and prospects of people in Asia and Africa regardless of faith, origin, or gender.[122]

In this section, I discuss only reforms accomplished in the religious life of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims under the establishment of ITREC and later ITREB that gradually replaced those mentioned above local religious institutions of *pīr*ship and the *khalīfa*s. The essence of reform as introduced by ITREC and ITREB was to establish an accommodating management structure of the Ismaili community in the Pamirs in order to ensure the absolute authority of the Imam; to protect

[122] For more details on the work of AKDN, see www.akdn.org.

the traditional spiritual values of the Ismaili faith; to ensure the stability of intra-community life; and, at the same time, to serve as a tool for modernizing society.[123]

The ITREC and ITREB disseminated information among the Pamirī Ismailis about the importance of the "constitution" of the Shi'a Imami Ismaili Muslims a document issued first time by the 48th Imam, Aga Khan III, Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1905 for the Ismailis in East Africa.[124] This "constitution" later was modified by His Highness the Aga Khan IV in 1986 and focused on itself as a single unifying system of governance for the Ismaili Muslims around the globe with branches and councils in countries wherever Ismaili Muslims reside.[125] The Aga Khan IV distributed the first universal Ismaili "constitution," and initiated regulation of all communities settled across the world who recognize his authority as the living Imam. The aim was to embrace all Ismaili lines of traditions with their differences and to build a normative understanding of the creed. The councils are officially recognized in each country as an Ismaili National Councils. However, the presence of such a council in Tajikistan was not possible at first, due to the political situation and the law of the country. The establishment of the Ismaili National Council occurred only in October 2011, with the official inauguration of the first Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe.

With the establishment of the ITREB in Dushanbe, now all such matters are being monitored directly from a secretariat office of the Aga Khan IV in Aiglemont, France. The ITREB became the driver of the reform of Ismailism in the Pamirs, resulted in the ending of the institution of *pīr*ship. The *khalīfa*s remained the only vital figures that the ITREB prepared and appointed as local representatives of itself. In order to attain this essential post, candidates were to: (i) have a

[123] Tohir Kalandarov, "Ismailizm na Pamire: Poisk novykh putei i resheniy" [Ismailism in the Pamirs: Search for New Ways and Solution] in *Rasi i Narodi. Ezhegodnik [Races and People Yearbook],* ed. Sergey Abashin and V. Bushkov (Moscow: Nauka, 2006), 180-196.
[124] "The Ismaili Community." AKDN, n.d. https://www.akdn.org/about-us/his-highness-aga-khan-3.(Accessed February 1, 2011).
[125] Jonah Steinberg, *Isma'ili Modern Globalization and Identity in a Muslim Community* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2011), 56.

command of the Persian language and have mastered the Arabic script; (ii) have a thorough knowledge of the religion and all religious matters; (iii) be able to preach the basic tenets of the Ismaili faith; (iv) be able to foster trust within the community; and (v) work in accordance with the regulations of the ITREB. Today there are approximately 90 *khalīfa*s in the Pamirs.[126]

Another essential reform of religious practice was the fulfillment of one of the most important Muslim rituals: prayer. Before the visit of the Aga Khan IV, the elder Pamirī Ismailis would recite a particular prayer "*Pīr-i Shoh*" in Arabic and Persian. They prayed, counting rosary beads (*tasbeh*), asking for help from God and the Imam and then making a bow. After the prayers, they could recite the Islamic creed, "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God."[127]

The Pamirī Ismailis in Badakhshan associate the "*Pīr-i Shoh*" prayer with Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *da'wa* activities. It should be noted that, in contrast to the Sunni and Twelver Shi'a Muslims, the Pamirī Ismailis perform prayers three times per day once in the morning before sunrise and twice in the evening after sunset rather than five times per day. The Pamirī Ismailī communities did not have mosques in which to perform their religious rituals; they would perform their daily and Friday communal prayers in their multifunctional Pamirī houses. In many places in the Pamirs, all religious ceremonies continue to take place in the home. It was only in 2008 that the Aga Khan IV laid the foundation for the construction of the first *jamoat-khona* (house of assembly) in Khorog, the capital of Badakhshan. This *jamoat-khona* was completed and opened for use in 2017.

Since 1995, a new form of prayer has spread in the region among the Pamirī Ismailis, which they call "*Duo-yi Muborak*" (Blessed Prayer). This prayer was introduced to Ismaili Muslims in 1957 when the Aga Khan IV became the spiritual leader. He aimed to "align the prayer with a universal

[126] Information by an employee of the ITREC, interviewed in November 2011 at Khorog.
[127] Gulbibi,Farmonbekova interview, December 2011, Shirgin Village.

language of Islamic liturgical practice."[128] This prayer consists of six parts read in Arabic. Each section of the prayer contains a selection of verses from the Qur'an and ends with the recitation of the 49 names of the Ismaili Imams, from Ali to Shāh Karīm al-Ḥusaynī, the present Imam of the Ismaili Muslims (also known as the Aga Khan IV). The recitation of another special prayer then follows this in Persian, in which the person praises God and asks Him for peace and harmony, for abundance and prosperity of the soul, for the existence of the Imam, and for his being a righteous leader for his followers.[129]

In March 2009, the ITREC announced a reform of one of the main elements of the wedding ceremony, the *nikoh*. Previously, a senior person in the house would bring a bowl of sweetened milk and butter inside (in the Shugnan region)[130] it is a bowl of water containing pieces of lamb meat to the *khalīfa*, covered with a handkerchief. Two male witnesses (*wakīl*), family members of the groom and the bride would then get on their knees in front of the *khalīfa*. The *khalīfa* would commence the recitation of the wedding text (*nikohnoma*), partly in Arabic and partly in Persian. Then, he would lift the handkerchief, take the bowl, whisper a prayer over it, and hand it to the godfather (*padar-khond*) of the groom. He would then ask the groom seated adjacent to the *khalifa,* to drink from the bowl first. Then the godfather would seek out the bride and ask her to drink from the bowl. After the bride had done so, the godfather would return to the groom and ask him to finish the remaining milk. The *khalīfa* would then ask the groom three times, "*Bikhostī va qabulash kardī*?" (Do you want and accept her?). In response, the groom would nod his head, meaning that

[128] Ali S. Asani, "From Satpanthi to Ismaili Muslim: The Articulation of Ismaili Khoja Identity in South Asia" in *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*, ed. Farhad Daftary (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 113.
[129] ITREC, interview, 2011, Khorog.
[130] For information on Shugnan wedding ceremonies, see Z. Yusufbekova, *Semya i Semeyniy byt' Shugnantsev (Konets 19- nachalo 20-vekov) [Family and Family life of the Shughnanis (End of XIX and beginning of XX centuries)]* (Moskva: IEA RAN, 2015); and T.C. Kalandarov, *Shugnantsy [The Shugnanis]* (Moskva: IEA RAN, 2004), 281-288.

he agreed. Then the *khalīfa* would recite a prayer in Persian for the bright future, prosperity, and successful lives of the newly married couple.[131]

Under the new rules, a standardized *nikohnoma* text composed for all Ismaili Muslims around the world was introduced in the Pamirs. The new *nikohnoma* consists of three parts: the *khutba*, the contract, and the *duo*. The *khutba* "sermon" is said at the beginning of the ritual and consists of the *khalīfa* praising Allah, mentioning the name of the Prophet Muhammad, Imam, Ali, and the name of the current Imam; and reading verses from the Holy Qur'an. The so-called contract is the central ritual of the marriage. It is when the bride and groom, in the presence of two adult witnesses, enter into a contract of marriage. The groom pays a dowry (a wedding gift from the groom to the bride), the amount of which both parties agree to in advance. The text of the contract is printed in an understandable language for the spouses in duplicate, one of which is given to the newly married couple, and the other remains with the ITREC. The contract, of course, is also marked with an official registration signature by the state's marriage agency afterward. The *duo* is the final part when the *khalīfa* prays on behalf of those present and wishes the newly married couple happiness and prosperity for their future life. During the ritual, activities such as taking photos, making videos, and performing music are regulated and limited. However, this is not strictly adhered to by the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims. After the *nikoh* ceremony is over, usually the music starts and people, especially the relatives of the groom and the bride dance.

Reforms have also been introduced in the Pamirī Ismaili funeral practices. In this case, it is the tradition of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, the ritual of *charoghrawshan* mentioned previously, which has been the standard practice. A dispute arose between a small group of people in Shughnan and the ITREC when the ITREC decided to change the time of the performance of the *charoghrawshan* ceremony.

[131] Mamadbek Mamadbekov, interview, November 2011, Yamg village, Wakhan.

For the last three or four decades, it was commonly accepted among the Pamirī Ismailis in Shughnan that the *charoghrawshan* would be performed at 5 am the second day after death. The ITREC asked the community to perform the ritual at midnight as they questioned the virtue of having people remain awake until five o'clock in the morning, leaving them too fatigued to work the following day. After several attempts to convince the community, the ITREC was successful in adjusting the timing of the ritual.[132]

The performance of the *qasīda-khonī* was also affected by these reforms. Today, according to new regulations and norms, the role *qasīda-khonī* as a normative source of social mores seems to have diminished. Restrictions issued by ITREC and later ITREB on the duration of the performances, the lyrics to be sung, the style of the performance and the musical instruments to be employed in congregational places, are all evidence of institutional influences on the *qasīda-khonī* performance.

The contemporary institutionalization of religious practices has, to some extent, undermined the socio-cultural and spiritual values of elder local practices. A particular problem faced in the Pamirs was that there were many internal diversity of spiritual practices and customs that did not resemble the religious customs of other Ismailis elsewhere in the world. One of the only common threads was the firm belief in the Imam, and the recognition of his spiritual authority, other than that, most features of their local religious practices were different. This issue arose not only in Tajik Badakhshan but also in Afghan Badakhshan. In a recent article, Iloliev has emphasized the problem: "… in Afghan Badakhshan, however, the new agencies seem to be reluctant to deploy the wisdom and expertise of those *pīr*s as part of an attempt to help their religious institutions in the region run smoothly. Some of the *pīrs* admit to feeling that they have been marginalized from

[132] Dawlatmamad Kholiqnazarov, interview, November 2011, Shughnan.

the region's Islamic tradition; others complain that they were represented by the new powerful elite as being the opponents of the new religious institutions."[133]

It is a historical challenge to reformulate the tradition of the Pamirī Ismailis within the worldwide contemporary institutionalized Ismaili tradition. These reconstitutions also affected the tradition of the *qasīda-khonī* to a great extent. Many song texts based upon narratives of the miracles accomplished by Ali, for example, were declared void. They are played today only in very few funeral ceremonies and occur in the repertoire of only the elder *qasīda-khon*s. Additionally, musical instruments are not permitted to be used during performances in places of the new religious congregation such as the *jamoat-khona*s.

The present Ismaili ritual and devotional culture practiced in religious centers and prayer halls across the world are those developed by the Khoja Ismailis from the Indian subcontinent and other parts of the world. It has become canonical and shapes modern Ismaili religious practices. The Khoja Ismailis also developed several institutions that serve Ismailis across the globe. Khoja Ismailis occupy the most important positions in Ismaili regional and international councils as they represent the primary financial foundation of the community.[134]

Although bonds had been lost between the Central Asian Ismaili community, of which the Pamirī Ismailis are the largest group, and their Imam, they continued to practice their religion in the framework of their traditional institutions. They did so until the new Ismaili global organizations were established. Presently, in all Ismaili places of worship across the globe, religious ceremonies follow the structure of the traditions developed by the South Asian Ismailis, making it the

[133] Abdulamamad Iloliev, "Pirship in Badakhshan," 169.
[134] Tazim R. Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance Hymns of the Satpanth Ismaìli Muslim Saint, Pir Shams* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 7.

standardized form of practice among Ismailis around the world. Central Asian cultures have been little integrated into this new global standard.

Conclusion

As previously discussed, the presence of Ismailism in the Pamir region was the result of the activities of a unique Ismaili institution, the *da'wa*. This system was established and implemented in different forms and under different institutional frameworks. As previously emphasized, Islamization was a gradual process during which a community moved through various stages of the process. Different factors have played a role in the process of the development and spread of Ismailism in Badakhshan. It is possible that some of these factors, such as literature and music, played a more significant role than has been ascribed to them. I have given the relevant background so far to begin this investigation into the *qasīda-khonī* performance. This included the subterranean Ismaili–Sufi ideology, which provides the fundamental principles and functions of Pamirī Ismaili religious practices. *Qasīda-khonī* is representative of the spiritual practice of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's legacy (*da'wa*). It has its heritage of Ismaili–Sufi teachings and poetry, and its ritual traditions centered around the *qasīda-khonī* ritual with a long-established group of performers who have maintained its legacy and promoted its heritage to serve the present-day spiritual and ritual needs of a large and diverse community of Ismailis in Badakhshan.

Qasīda-khonī can be regarded as an example of the vernacularization of Islamic traditions associated with Persian literature in Badakhshan. In the Pamirī cultural milieu, *qasīda-khonī* was adapted to local social customs and ritual practices, and transformed into a musical genre that employs a range of indigenous terms, religious symbols, metaphors, musical styles, and instruments. In Badakhshan today, it represents the leading religious musical practice – a form of worship that communicates one's religiosity (*dindorī*) – and is commonly referred to as spiritual music (*musiqī-yi irfonī/rūhonī*) *par excellence*.

As part of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's legacy, the primary purposes of *qasīda-khonī* are to convey the religious teachings of Ismailism and events of Islamic history and to offer praise to God, the Prophet, and the Imams of the Ismailis. A central theme of the performance is the spiritual role of the Imams in leading the community on the right path. Through the act of listening to *qasīda-khonī,* participants seek to approach God and their living spiritual leader and thereby achieve an understanding of the spiritual truths (*haqoiq*). The powerful messages of *qasīda-khonī* intensify one's spirituality and help transcend conscious striving towards a spiritual vision, the "esoteric reunion" (*botinī dīdor*). The poetic texts carry a potent religious message, urging the listeners to transcend the physical world, bringing them closer to the realm of spiritual realities, i.e., understanding the authority of the Imam and the esoteric and exoteric reunion of his presence in their life. The music serves to ignite emotions and intensify the participants' longing for that reunion.

As a recognized musical genre in the Pamirs, *qasīda-khonī* shares general characteristics with other folk music of the GBAO such as *falak* with specific features and functions relating to particular religious ceremonies. The term *qasīda-khonī* itself applies both to the musical genre and the occasion of its performance at mourning ceremonies, religious festivals, and private evening gatherings. While the performance's origins are lost to prehistoric obscurity, the community's legends and traditional stories assert that this tradition was part of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's mission to propagate the Ismaili form of Islam in Central Asia. In consideration of this role, the following chapters seek a closer examination of *qasīda-khonī* as one part of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's Ismaili mission in the region.

Chapter 3: *Qasīda-khonī:* Learning, Practicing, and Performing the Musical Tradition

> *"If qasīda-khonī disappears, then one part of the world tradition [sunnat-i olam] is lost."*
> *Azizkhon Karimov, a qasīda-khon*

Defining *Qasīda-khonī* and Exploring Its Roots

The Origins

The term *qasīda-khonī* is a combination of two words: the Arabic word *qaṣīda* (ode) and the Tajik/Persian word *khon*, derived from the verb *khondan*, meaning the one who recites, reads or sings. *Qasīda-khonī* means the recitation or the singing of *qaṣīda*s. As a specific genre of Arabic poetry, the *qaṣīda* maintains a single meter and rhyme throughout the poem. It usually has fifteen to a hundred lines, sometimes even longer. It is often panegyric composed in praise of nature, kings, the prophets, and the Imams.

In the GBAO, *qaṣīda*s are recited melodically or sung and their performance, *qasīda-khonī*, often involves more than the singing of *qaṣīda*s: it is a performative event, in which mainly men sing different genres of poetry, not limited only to *qaṣīda*s properly speaking, set to various tunes and accompanied by local musical instruments. This performative event is believed to have a long tradition among the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims. Any genre of poetry that is part of the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire in the local idioms is referred to as *mado*, *qasoid*, or *qasīda.*[135]

Originating in pre-Islamic Arabia, the *qaṣīda* is a classical genre of Islamic Arabic poetry, that from the 10th century onward, spread from Persia to Central Asia, extending its influence to other

[135] The texts of the *qasida-khonī* songs are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 below.

languages of the Muslim world.[136] In Central Asia, it acquired new formats and styles. For example, the Persian poets developed new forms of the *qaṣīda*, such as spring (*bahoriya*), wine (*khamriya*), autumn (*khazoniya*), hunting (*tardiya*), and praise (*madḥiya*) poetry. These formats, in particular, the panegyric *madḥ* (*madḥ* shares the etymological root of *maddāḥ* (panegyric singer) and *maddo* the local idioms), were brought to Central Asia as part of the Sufi and Ismaili spiritual traditions and missions.[137]

Viewed within the context of Islamic civilization in Central Asia, *qasīda-khonī* belongs to a larger corpus of Muslim cultural practices, 'popular' or 'folk' in orientation, that utilize local music and forms of performance. Studies of Islam in Central Asia demonstrate that music and literature were responsible for spreading Islamic principles in the region.[138] They were instrumental in propagating fundamental Islamic concepts to native populations, and such propagation has been observed in Muslim societies in the other areas as well.[139] Thus, through the performance of *qasīda-khonī*, Islamic tradition became indigenized in the local Pamirī cultural environment, and "reflects the variety of ways in which Islam has been assimilated into the region."[140]

In the cultural milieu of the Pamir Mountains, the *qaṣīda* was adapted to local social customs and ritual practices, and transformed into a musical genre that employs a range of indigenous terms, poems, religious symbols, metaphors, and musical styles, and involves instruments and today serves within various ritual and musical contexts. It bears little resemblance to the *qaṣīda* of the

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[136] See Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, eds. *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa: Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*, vol. 1 (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1996).
[137] Amirbek Abibov, *Az ta'rikh-i Adabiyot-i Tojik dar Badakhshon* [From the History of Tajik Literature in Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1974).
[138] Peter B Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66-74.
[139] See Annemarie Schimmel, "Reflections on Popular Muslim Poetry," *Contribution to Asian Studies,* 17 (1982): 17-26; Richard Eaton, "Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Islam," *History of Religions,* 14(2) (1974-75): 115-27; and Ali S. Asani, "Sufi Poetry in the Folk Tradition of Indo-Pakistan," *Religion and Literature,* 20 (1988): 81-94.
[140] Alexander Djumaev, "Religious Music and Chant in the Culture of Sedentary-Dwellers", in *The Music of Central Asia,* eds. Theodore Levin, Elmira Kochumkulova and Saida Daukeyeva, (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2016), 286.

Arabic or Persian traditions. In the GBAO today, the *qaṣīda*s sung at religious assemblies are commonly regarded as spiritual music (*musīqī-yi irfonī/rūhonī*) practiced by, and for people who consider themselves pious (*dindor*).

The formation, spread, and adaptation of *qasīda-khonī* is part of the larger story of the popularization and institutionalization of Ismaili Islam. The eleventh-century Persian mystic poet Nāṣir-i Khusraw, believed to be the founder of the Ismaili community in the Pamirs, is credited with the introduction of *qaṣīda* recitation into local religious and musical practice.[141] The *Bahr ul-akhbor* [Ocean of News], a local hagiographical account of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, which was published in 1992 on the 990th anniversary of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's birth, describes his travels to the Pamir Mountains and his various adventures and miracles of conversion along the way. He is said to have turned the horse of the Badakhshanī king Malik Jahon Shoh into stone and fashioned a *rubob*, the principal musical instrument today played in the performance of *qasīda-khonī*, from the saddle of that horse, and then asked the king to recite a *qaṣīda*.[142] Apart from this, there are no written historical sources that document the practice of *qasīda-khonī* before the Islamization of the region.

Nāṣir-i Khusraw's influence is noted by local *qasīda-khons*, for example, Azizkhon Karimov, from Tughgoz village in Wakhan, who recounts:

> *During his time in Yumgon, Nāṣir-i Khusraw asked people who were talented in singing and playing musical instruments to participate in his missionary activities. It is from that time that qasoid-khonī became an essential part of our culture.*[143]

A retired teacher, Ismoilbek Ismoilbekov relate a similar story:

[141] The legends and traditional stories of the community affirm Nāṣir-i Khusraw as a charismatic figure, providing an example of holy man possessed of sacred knowledge and miraculous powers..
[142] R. Rahmonqulov, *Bahr-ul-akhbor* [Ocean of News] (Khorog: Pamir Press, 1991), 32-33.
[143] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, September 9, 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.

> *When pīr Nosir came to Badakhshan, his first contacts were with* mutrib*s [musicians]. In one of the villages in Badakhshan, he chose a man, who was a rubob player to play and sing at his majlis [gathering].*[144]

While it is hard to ascertain the historical accuracy of such stories, they do help to illustrate the Pamirī Ismaili understanding of the source of *qaṣīda*s as part of their tradition. They also point to the vital role played by music and musicians in the region, and how Muslim preachers employed the local culture in propagating their creed.

Religious and Communal Purpose of Qasīda-khonī

Today, *qasīda-khonī* is performed in sessions that last for many hours on a variety of social, cultural, and religious occasions: on Thursday evenings and Fridays in private houses, during cultural and religious festivals, at shrines of saints, and, in particular, on the death of a community. Since the first visit of the Aga Khan to the region in May of 1995, an additional three annual festivals have been introduced at which *qasīda-khonī* is now also performed, namely, the so-called Day of Light (*Rūz-i Nur*), which is associated with the first visit of the Aga Khan to the region; the birthday of the Aga Khan, called *Id-i Mawlud*; and the Day of the Imamate (*Rūz-i Takhtnishinī*), which commemorates the day on which the present Aga Khan, the Aga Khan IV, became Imam. Additionally, sometimes, *qasīda-khonī* is experienced as a healing ceremony.[145]

While literary scholar Gabrielle Rachel van den Berg describes *qasīda-khonī* as "religious practice"[146] however, in today's context *qasīda-khonī* is also performed in many non-religious settings both within the GBAO and of outside the region, making it difficult to identify it as an exclusively religious category. It is also performed during various cultural and national holidays elsewhere in Tajikistan and as a form of "traditional Tajik music" at many international concerts.

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[144] Ismoilbek Ismoilbekov, interview, October 15, 2011, Vrang village, Wakhan.
[145] Benjamin Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World: Music, Prayer, and Healing in the Pamir Mountains* (Oxford University Press, 2009). 49-50.
[146] Gabrielle Rachel van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004), 35.

As a widely recognized musical performance from the Pamirs, *qasīda-khonī* shares general characteristics with other folk music of the GBAO and the southern mountainous part of Tajikistan. It is today studied mainly at the National Conservatory of Tajikistan and the Tajik Traditional Music departments as a subject within the domain of *falak* but without its unique features relating to specifically religious functions. *Qasīda-khonī* is often introduced as "*Falak-i Badakhshon*" at national musical, cultural events in Tajikistan. *Falak,* literally, 'fate' is a song of separation and longing that draws its textual base primarily from oral folk poetry.[147] In Badakhshan *falak* includes many other related formats. For instance, there is a sub-genre known as *falak-i dashtī*, performed by male shepherds while herding their animals; and *falak-i motam* (the mourning *falak*) or *falak-i faryod* (the crying *falak*) performed by women during funeral ceremonies. Each format delivered in differing contexts with different intentions. In *qasida-khonī* music, *falak* serves as one section of the music.

Among the Pamirī Ismailis, this religio-musical performance has distinct forms and specific names in each of the districts of the GBAO. Referred to as *maddo*[148] or *maddo-khonī* in the Shughnan and Rushan districts, it is known as *qasoid-khonī* in the Wakhan valley. In local scholarly and literary sources in Tajik, it is also called *madhiya-khonī.*149 In addition to phonetic variations of *maddoh* and *qasīda*, other local terms for this practice are used in Badakhshan; for example, *haydarī* among the Ismailis of Darwaz district.

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[147] Faroghat Azizi, *Makom i Falak kak Yavleniya Professionalnogo Traditsionogo Musikalnogo Tvorchestvo Tadzhikov,* [*Maqom* and *Falak* as a Professional Traditional Musical Oeuvre of Tajiks] (Dushanbe: Adib, 2009), 83-89.

[148] Some scholars write the term *maddo* as *maddoh* or *maddah*. See, for example, Benjamin D. Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World*; and Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry*). I use the term *maddo* as it is pronounced and used in local languages because the letter "h" is not part of the local languages in the GBAO.

[149] N. Shakarmamadov and H., Tavakkalov, "*Chand mulohiza peromuni maddoh*" [Some arguments about *maddoh*], *Payom-i Donishgoh-i Khorugh* [Bulletin of Khorog University] 2, No.1 (1999): 72-77. H. Tavvakalov, "*Madhiyssaro-yi boistedod az Shohdara*" [A talented *maddo* singer from Shohdara], *Payom-i Donishgoh-i Khorugh* [Bulletin of Khorog University] 2, No. 3 (2001), 82-85.

The *maddo* of Shughnan and Rushan districts and the *qasoid-khonī* of the Wakhan valley are closely related from the perspective of performance and religious significance. They differ, however, in musical details such as the rendering of strumming patterns on accompanying instruments, means of transitioning from one formal section of a piece to the next, and how the singers interact during a performance, as well as the interpretations of the songs and music. It must be noted that these terms apply both to the musical performance and the occasions of its performance at funeral ceremonies, religious festivals, and private gatherings.

Qasīda-khons*: The Performers of *Qasīda-khonī

Men and Some Women

The *maddo* or *qasoid-khonī* is understood to be an individual or group song performed by *qasīda-khon*s (*qasoid-khon*s or *maddo-khon*s) [i.e., singers of the *qasīda*s]. They are mainly male musicians from diverse social backgrounds. It is usual in the course of history that when traditions travel and interactions occur between different communities, concepts and their meanings transform, develop new shapes, take on new meanings, and function differently in the same cultural and geographical contexts. In the Pamir region, following the diversity of languages spoken and the course of historical transformations, various terms have come to be used for the performers of this tradition. In Shugnan and Rushan, for example, they are known as *maddo-khons,* and in Ishkashim and Wakhan they are referred to as *qasoid-khon*s.

In his book *Futuvvat-nāma-yi Sulṭānī* [The Royal Book of Chivalry], Mawlānā Ḥusayn Vā'iẓ-i Kāshifī, a sixteenth-century Persian poet, described the *qasīda-khon*s as public entertainers who were also religious storytellers (*maddāḥ/qiṣṣa-khān*) and propagated Islamic values through song and storytelling:

> *If you ask what the distinctive characteristics of the maddāḥ are, they are these: the maddāḥ is not distinguished by his robe or other clothing. They are permitted to*

> *wear any apparel. They are recognized by carrying a lance, a napkin, a lamp, and a battle-ax … they sing poems very simply.*[150]

In the GBAO today, especially in the regions of Shugnan and Rushan, the term *maddoh* (in its local form *maddo*) refers to the performance but not to the performer. Kāshifī's description of the *maddāḥ* indicates that the term has changed in the local context from applying to a performer, to refer to the performance.

Today, the *qasīda-khon*s are, for the most part, non-professional musicians and singers coming from diverse social backgrounds. Most of them do not have a certified degree from any of the musical institutions of Tajikistan, such as the National Conservatory, the Institute of Arts and Culture, or a musical college. They also do not depend upon their musical skills to earn their living. As musicians, their social role in their communities depends on their position in society as well as their self-image.[151] They are aware that they are not professional musicians and singers, and that this sets them apart from other instrumentalists, singers, and musicians. They consider themselves community-based performers who ground their performance in personal faith and religious ritual. They, therefore, occupy an honorable position amongst the Pamirī Ismailis in the GBAO, which contributes to the continuity and stability of Ismaili spiritual practices and its musical traditions.

In the ideological, socio-economic, and cultural domains of Pamirī Ismaili life, the *qasīda-khon* is the central figure of *qasīda-khonī* and occupies a significant position. As with all musicians, singers, and artists in Tajikistan, *qasīda-khon*s come under the category of cultural producers in the broader sense of producing and providing services to articulate valued cultural traditions. This service is identified with religious and cultural values to be propagated through various local ceremonies and national and international cultural programs.

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[150] Ḥusayn Vā'iẓ-i Kāshifī, *Futuvvat-nāma-yi Sulṭānī* [The Royal Book of Chivalry] (Dushanbe: Adib, 1991), 97-98.
[151] Alan Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 123.

Concerning their performance in religious ceremonies and communal events, the *qasīda-khon*s are in the spiritual hierarchy ranked after the *khalīfa*s. In the history of Ismailism, there were a number of institutionalized religious ranks within the institution of *da'wa* during the Fatimid and Alamut periods, with the Imam at the top of the hierarchy followed by the *hujjat* [the proof], *dā'ī* [the summoner], *mu'allim* [the teacher], the *ma'dhūn-i akbar* [the senior licentiate], and the *ma'dhūn-i asghar* [junior licentiate].[152] In the Pamirī Ismaili tradition, in religious ranking, after the *pīr*s there came the *khalīfa*s and finally the *qasīda-khon*s. However, some of the *khalīfa*s are in fact also *qasīda-khon*s. Both the *khalīfa*s and the *qasīda-khon*s serve to guide the Pamirī Ismailis in matters of religion in their daily life.

Today, a *qasīda-khon* is not only a singer of *qasīdas* or other genres of classical Persian poetry, but in some cases, mainly during funeral ceremonies, he also interprets or explains the meaning of the song texts as needed or requested by the participants. At cultural festivals or concerts, the *qasīda-khon* is introduced as a singer or a musician who represents a region or the nation on stage.

Female Qasīda-khons

The political and cultural upheaval witnessed since the Soviet period brought a surge of development in the region. *Qasīda-khonī* was subject to this process, too, which resulted in the participation of female *qasīda-khon*s in recent years. Young female members of the community sing *qasīdas* in *jamoat-khona*s before commencing with the second unit of their prayer. Sohiba Dawlatshoeva, from the generation of Soviet singers, is famous as a folk singer in Tajikistan who is also in charge of training female students at the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe. As the head of "Pamir" musical ensemble, Sohiba also performs *qasīda-khoni* in folk cultural concerts internationally together with Aqnazar Alowatov, a vocalist of the band.

[152] Virani N. Shafique, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, A Search for Salvation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 160.

The women's repertoire of song texts, melodies, and compositions differs from that of the male performers. The latter sing in what the performers refer to as the "authentic" style of *qasīda-khonī*, while the female performers are more strongly associated with singing popular songs, which is locally termed *bayd* or *soz.* Female singing is also popularly referred to as the "*ginan*" style, which refers to the religious hymns performed by Khoja Ismailis in the Indian subcontinent.[153]

Female *qasīda-khon*s are involved not only in religious performances but are also active performers in cultural programs nationally and internationally. I attended a folk music festival called "Andaleb" in Dushanbe in August 2014, where a group of young female singers and instrumentalists from the GBAO performed *qasīda-khonī*.[154] The festival is a musical contest, and their performance scored highest and then broadcasted on national television for a week.

Some people, including *qasīda-khon*s from the Pamirs, find it unusual to see female members of the community perform the traditional music. Traditionally, it was a strictly male performance, although, there is conjecture that a female singer from Rushan named Mohjon Nazardodova used to perform *qasīda-khonī* at funeral ceremonies.[155] Nowadays, in light of the transformations in religious practice, the format of *qasīda-khon* is no longer as stable as it once was, with many people finding it difficult to define who a *qasīda-khon* is or should be.

Musician or Qasīda-khon?

Generally, Pamiris differentiate the *qasīda-khon* from other musicians and singers. Some criteria have been devised to mark the identity of a true *qasīda-khon*. One of the common ways is to

[153] For a study of Khoja Ismaili religious hymns, see Tazim R Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance Hymns of the Satpanth Ismaili Muslim Saint, Pir Shams* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Ali S. Asani, *Ecstasy and Enlightenment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002).
[154] See a photo in Appendix B.
[155] It should be noted that women are traditionally engaged in singing mourning songs (*kasha/falak/sifat*) in funeral ceremonies, but not *qasīda-khonī.*

distinguish between amateurs and professional musicians or singers: a "professional" is a musician who has had formal training in music and pursues musical performance as an economical supplement to his main livelihood.[156] The *qasīda-khon*s are endowed with social capital, and elevated status in Pamirī Ismailis society as their music is understood a voluntary service in the life of the community, rather than on commercial interest.

In this regard, one of my interviewees, Marambek, a music teacher from Tughgoz village does not consider himself to be in the same position as Azizkhon, a *qasīda-khon* lives in Marambek's neighborhood.[157] Both of them are musicians, but Marambek does not designate himself as a *qasīda-khon* but just as a singer (*hofiz* or *baydguy*).[158] He felt incapable of attaining status as a *qasīda-khon* because it is a delicate and heavy responsibility. Marambek elaborates on this, asserting that whereas he earns money from the music he plays, Azizkhon is a volunteer. Marambek provides entertainment at weddings and concerts, whereas Azizkhon supports people in misfortune and difficulties. Marambek is invited and performs for money, but Azizkhon requires no invitation, nor does he take money. Whereas a mediocre wedding performance by Marambek might draw ire or disappointment, Azizkhon's performances are always appreciated, even if unexceptional.

Furthermore, while Marambek gained a university degree in music, Azizkhon does not have any formal qualifications. In sum, *qasīda-khon* are distinguished by the higher rank they have than any other musician in the region. Olim, a young *qasīda-khon* from Rushan, whom I met in Khorog, echoed similar sentiments, saying:

> *When he [Marambek] performs at weddings, he is paid for it. In case he does not perform well, he might be reprimanded, but in qasīda-khonī, such attitudes are absent, especially at funerals. No one will tell you that you did a bad job. It does not*

[156] Kaemmer, *Music in Life*, 49.
[157] See the photo of Azizkhon Karimov with his disciples in Appendix C.

[158] *Baydguy* describes a person who sings love songs, wedding songs, and so forth at weddings and concerts.

> *matter how you perform; people still acknowledge it, and you still have the respect of the people.*[159]

Another essential feature that distinguishes the *qasīda-khon*s from other singers in the region is that they take on roles and duties, in addition to singing or playing musical instruments, which shape their sense of self. Azizkhon, as a *qasīda-khon*, learned not only the music and how to sing it, but also the moral virtues that are required for a person who wishes to become a *qasīda-khon.* Such a person should have a strong will, patience, dedication to his work, community, and faith, and be truthful in deeds and words. Azizkhon states that if a person achieves learning of being *qasīda-khon* has to follow these processes, he will earn respect among the people and will be considered a competent and respected *qasīda-khon*. Azizkhon is invited to events and funerals to perform, and he never rejects any invitation unless he is sick. He goes on to highlight this point:

> *God has bestowed this wealth on me, and I consider it my obligation to serve my community in times of crisis. This is what I learn from my* ustods*. It is mentioned in the qasīdas as well. For instance, in one of the qasīdas, it says:* "Khoja daryob, ki jon dar tan-i inson adab ast, Odam az olam-i ulvist, sharaf-i jon adab ast" *[O man of distinction! Be aware that the soul of in the man's body is* adab[160]*. Humans are elevated than (all) the world (and)* adab *is the grandeur of the soul.].*[161]

I did not encounter a single person who did not recognize Azizkhon and his dedication and service to the community. When I spoke to people about *qasīda-khonī,* they would always highly recommend that I visit Azizkhon since he embodies the ideal *qasīda-khon* or similar.

I encountered Azizkhon Karimov several times throughout my fieldwork. Azizkhon is a pensioner in his seventies, living in a village called Tughgoz, Azizkhon underwent training from several masters to become a *qasīda-khon.* He is the head of his household and provides care for his grandchildren while his sons are migrant labor in Russia. He lacks higher education, having

[159] Olim, interview, October 2011, Khorog.
[160] *Adab* here means well educated man, nobleness of the heart. A person with great attitude and cares about others.
[161] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011,Tughgoz Village, Wakhan.

attended school only up to the seventh grade. Music and singing have been his lifelong passion and, according to him, were "a means to uplift [his] spirit and happiness." He further asserted that,

> Rubob *became my best friend. Whenever I felt bored, unhappy, depressed, I played* rubob *and sang a piece from my* bayoz.[162] *While playing and singing, all my problems disappear, and I feel good.*[163]

Azizkhon did not depend on performing music for his livelihood, and to this day, he considers *qasīda-khonī* an esoteric practice for himself and his community. To subsist, he began work as a shepherd soon after he completed seventh-grade studies. Then he served his compulsory service in the Soviet army for two years, from 1959 to 1962. After that, he returned to his village and worked in a *kolkhoz* (a collective farm) until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Throughout that time, he used to serve the community as a *qasīda-khon* in the region. He is until today often invited to various occasions where *qasīda-khonī* is performed.

After the fall of the Soviet regime, the importance of the *qasīda-khon*s increased dramatically. A few people turned to singing the *qasīda*s during the revival of religion in the post-Soviet era. Many professional musicians and singers trained in the Tajik Soviet institutions such as *Institut-i San'at* [Art Institute] in Dushanbe, who had previously worked and taught at Soviet musical schools, now began to perform *qasīda-khonī*. Singers who started singing it after the collapse of the Soviet Union include: Jumakhon, a former director of the musical school in Ishkahsim; Shoqirghiz, a solo singer of the folklore ensemble of "La'l-i Badakhshon" [The Ruby of Badakhshan] from Wakhan; and Murodbek, Salim, Orzu, and Nawruz from Shughnan and Wakhan. While the professionals were now engaging in *qasīda-khonī*, some non-professional *qasīda-khon*s, who had already been community-based performers before, now came before a wider circle of audiences and started

[162] *Bayoz* is a collection of poetry. In our case it is a specific collection that the *qasīda-khon*s inherit from their masters. It exists in written form as a valuable object with sacred meaning for the performers but also as cassettes, CDs, and DVDs. I will write about *bayoz* in detail further down Chapter 3.
[163] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.

performing in various social and cultural events. Aqnazar Alowatov and Olucha Muallibshoev can be counted among the latter. Today, *qasīda-khon*s are no longer conceived of as community-based performers who only play music and sing religious songs; they are viewed as bearers of national culture and religion.

The Qasīda-khon's Skills, Role, and Value in the Community

A *qasīda-khon* must train for many years, continually revising and honing his craft. To enter the realm of *qasīda-khonī,* it is essential for an aspirant performer to: acquire singing skills; play musical instruments such as the *rubob* and *rubobcha, balandzikom* and *tanbūr* (stringed instruments) and *daf* or *doira* (frame drum)*;* have a strong memory for quick recall of the song texts; and have a sound moral character. In addition to these attributes, they must also have an in-depth knowledge of the *qasīda*s or all other songs and have the will to endure the drills of memorization.

The *qasīda-khon*'s skills are not merely technical. Marambek recalls his experience of attending a *qasīda-khonī* performance at a funeral ceremony and considering it a failure. According to him, many people dozed off during the performance. Remaining awake for the entire night of a funeral ceremony is known as a spending a *shab-i nakhusp* [the wakeful night], where *qasīda-khon*s perform the whole night, and the attendees are not supposed to sleep until morning. Marambek believes that it is the failure of particular *qasīda-khon*s who are not able to attract and keep the attention of the participants so that they fall asleep. Falling asleep is considered disrespectful to the family of the deceased as well as to the performers. Therefore, the *qasīda-khon*s must perform in a way to affect the body and mind of the listener. Marambek recounts one event like this:

> *Besides not being good musicians, the performers sang the song texts incorrectly. They were unable to attract the people's attention, since they did not know what to sing. They were not qasīda-khon*s *but baydguys [singers].*[164]

Zaimkhon, another *qasīda-khon* to whom I will return further in this chapter, shares Marambek's view on unskilled *qasīda-khon*s. According to him, in most cases the performances of the contemporary young would-be *qasīda-khon*s are a failure: "Their failure is usually obvious when they sing incorrectly, or they are not able to convey the meaning of the poetry. Most importantly, they are not able to sit through a long performance, as they always confine themselves to short poems."[165] Zaimkhon, however, acknowledges that the young *qasīda-khon*s have both good singing voices and are skilled at playing their instruments.

But a good voice and the ability to play a musical instrument are not enough to be a *qasīda-khon.* The performer must be able to recall a large number of song texts to perform for a long duration. But this is still only a technical requirement, while there are more crucial requirements along with it. The performance Marambek commented on was not considered to be of a high musical standard as it was perceived to be providing support to the community, as part of the rituals of mourning. As Marambek explains,

> *...Today people might judge some* qasīda-khon*s based on their poor performance of music and singing, but their works are still appreciated for the matter of* yorbrodarī *[intra-communal solidarity], social service to the community.*[166]

Such a comment indicates that musical ability or technique may be a minor factor in determining the status of *qasīda-khon*s*.* Their social contribution establishes their reputation and status.[167] Many *qasīda-khon*s can play different melodies on their musical instruments, but when asked about

[164] Marambek Vakhonbekov, interview, December 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.
[165] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.
[166] Marambek, interview November 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.
[167] John E. Kaemmer, *Music in Human Life: Anthropological Perspectives on Music* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).

the melodies they play, they are not able to explain them. Today, many people evaluate the *qasīda-khon*s not simply as musicians, singers, or performers but also as supporters, 'protectors' of the faith, and embodiments of the past in the present. In short, the *qasīda-khon*s render their community service. It is not the case that a *qasīda-khon* must be asked to perform; performing when need arises is rather a social norm or expectation for every *qasīda-khon* to follow or fulfill. This endows *qasīda-khon*s with special social status.

Towards this end, they must display a significant amount of endurance and stamina while performing. The *qasīda-khon*s should be capable of performing at special social events, particularly funerals throughout the night and often for several days. They are lauded for their ability to overcome fatigue. These physical aspects of the performance cannot be learned without proper guidance from a master. Therefore, having an *ustod* ['master' or 'guide'] is very important for the disciple. Zaimkhon acknowledges the importance of an *ustod* with the verse: "*Be pir maraw, ki dar memonī. Harchand Sikandar-i zamonī*" [Do not go without a *pir*, for you will be trapped, even though you were the Alexander the Great of your time.][168] Zaimkhon believes that the respect and reputation that he enjoys in the community today is the result of his *ustod* Mulloshamsher's guidance.

The Process of Becoming a Qasīda-Khon

The Master-and-Disciple System

The process of training to become a *qasīda-khon* is not standardized in the GBAO. It varies according to his temperament and the circumstances and milieu in which the *qasīda-khon* is living. Each person has a different experience of becoming *qasīda-khon,* but most *qasīda-khon*s have studied in a system customarily known as the *ustod-shogird* [master-disciple] system. They are

[168] Zaimkhon, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.

trained in the tradition by a master, an established *qasīda-khon,* i.e., they have an instructor whom they call *malim/molem* (in Wakhi and Shughni languages) or *ustod* [teacher].

In the *ustod-shogird* system, knowledge of the various forms of the expressive arts, including music, is orally transmitted, from master to disciple. This system has played a significant role in the transmission of knowledge, information, and skills across historical periods, cultures, and communities. As a cultural phenomenon, it is found in Central Asian countries and the Middle East,[169] known as *guru-shishya* in India[170] and *iemoto-seido* in Japan.[171] The system is rooted in the scheme of oral transmission and of acquiring knowledge through a master-apprentice relationship. This relationship is not only significant during the first stage of learning, but also in the improvement of professional skills for learning to perform the music at an advanced level, for example, when it has to perform for long hours. To achieve this level, the disciple requires a master from whom he learns the music and performance through methods of "personal contact, from hand to hand or from heart to heart."[172] In Tajik musical culture, the system of *ustod-shogird* works with the method of *az dahon ba dahon* "from mouth to mouth" or *az sīna ba sīna* "from chest to chest" meaning a process of transmission in periodical encounter.

Through the *ustod-shogird* model, the student learns from an elderly master, the subtleties and intricacies of performance. Contrary to the manner in which music is today, written down, recorded, taught at colleges and universities, *qasīda-khonī* is taught primarily in oral and visual

[169] Faroghat Azizi, *Makom i Falak kak Yavleniya Professional'nogo Traditsionogo Muzikal'nogo Tvorchestva Tadzhikov* [*Maqom* and *Falak* as factor of the Professional Traditional Musical Creativity of Tajiks] (Dushanbe: Adib, 2009).
[170] Andrew Alter, "Gurus, Shishyas and Educators: Adaptive Strategies in Post-Colonial North Indian Music Institutions," in *Music-Cultures in Contact: Convergences and Collisions,* ed. Margaret J. Kartomi and Stephan Blum, (Sydney: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1994), 158-68.
[171] Robert J. Smith, "Transmitting tradition by the rules: An anthropological interpretation of the *iemoto* system," in *Leaning in Likely Places: Varieties of Apprenticeship in Japan*, ed. John Singleton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 23-34.
[172] Razia Sultanova, "Master-Apprentice (Usto-Shogird) Training System in the Ferghana Musical Tradition," in *Sacred Knowledge: Schools or Revelation?: Master-Apprentice System of Oral Transmission in the Music of the Turkic Speaking World,* ed. Razia Sultanova (Koln: Lambert Academic, 2009), 36.

forms through interpersonal communication. In addition, future *qasīda-khon*s must acquire the mental and physical capability to remain awake during rituals that can last for fifteen to twenty hours. They must discipline their bodies and connect with the participants during their performance. They work on honing these skills in front of their masters for several years until they are by their masters granted permission to perform in public.

Concerning the master-disciple system, the *qasīda-khon*s can be divided into two groups: those who learn their skills within the family and those who have or had, a master outside their family. Those who study with a family member often work within their patrilineal kinship group, i.e., with a grandfather, their father, an uncle, or an elder brother. The system may, however, worked through the matrilineal kinship group as well. The kinship-based system is the preferred and prevalent way, but it is not the only one. In some other cases, the *qasīda-khon*s were said to be "bestowed by God" with their talent.

> *In my family, nobody was a musician, but I was interested in singing. I used to sing when I was at school, weddings. Nobody taught me music. I believe God has gifted me with this talent. When I grew older, I started singing qasīdas. I used to sing at home when I was alone.*[173]

Several *qasīda-khon*s have learned their art by participating in performances observing and following examples. A few of them reported that they developed their skills by listening to tapes and CDs and by watching DVDs of others performing.[174] There is an apparent overlap in the use of these different training methods, with several of the *qasīda-khon*s acknowledging that their experience incorporated multiple modes of learning. There seems to be no established or set curriculum or system of training that every single *qasīda-khon*s must undergo. The most common

[173] Kholmamad Kholmamadov, 50 years old, Interview, December 2011, Khorog.
[174] Mirzoev Alibek, interview, January 2012, Shirgin village, Wakhan.

processes of learning involve demonstration on the part of the master and observation and imitation on the disciple's role.

Connection with Family Circles

Family occupies an essential place in the culture of *qasīda-khonī.* Some *qasīda-khon*s acquire their initial interest in art through their family. As mentioned before, they commence their training in the patrilineal family circle, usually working with their grandfather, father, or brother. This is often supported by a broader kinship circle, including uncles or other close relatives.

This familial practice has preserved *qasīda-khonī* like many other arts and crafts in the Pamirs over time. There exists a general sense of obligation to contribute to the musical heritage in one's familial lineage. Children are raised and involved in a musical environment and taught to become musicians by their fathers or a family elder. They learn the system informally and later become masters who, in turn, teach their children. The following examples highlight the passing down of musical traditions in family circles.

Shodikhon

Shodikhon is a *daf* player who plays the *daf* a frame drum, in *qasīda-khonī* performances. He makes a point of teaching this art to his three sons. In his own words,

> *The daf is a musical instrument that is part of our everyday life. We use it at weddings, funerals, concerts, and on many other occasions. Therefore I want my children to know how important this is for us. I want my sons to respect what we have. I would like them to learn the art of playing the daf. We have one excellent phrase in the Tajik language, and I always tell it to my children: hunar beh az mulk-u ma'vo-yi padar! [Artfulness is better than being endowed with one's father's wealth!]*[175]

[175] Shodikhon, interview November 2011, Khorog.

Shodikhon considers his art a part of his wealth and emphasized that "people die, the wealth exhausts, but their *hunar* [art] lives forever."[176] With this in mind, Shodikhon has worked to transmit his art to his sons. Aside from direct teaching, his sons receive inspiration from their father when they observe him perform at weddings, concerts, or by watching his performances on local television. Shodikhon's performance inspired his sons to be involved in various cultural and communal events. Presently, Shodikhon's sons participate in musical performances at their schools and take part in an annual inter-school competitive musical show. Shodikhon's eldest son already received an award for young artists, known as the "*Ghunchaho-yi San'at* [Flower-bud of the Arts.]. Shodikhon's son has transformed from the son of a *daf* player to an instrumentalist of the *daf* in his own right. His performance has added to his social identity, shifting it from being just a "son" to also being an "instrumentalist." The example of Shodikhon's sons, not only the eldest one demonstrates the "performative" action of his father who "taught, persuaded, or convinced"[177] him to also perform, strengthening the position the family holds in their community as part of the *qasīda-khonī* tradition. Through their performance, it is not only their art that is appreciated, but also their identities are constructed, articulated, and circulated in the community.

Olucha and Mamadali

Likewise, Olucha, a *qasīda-khon* who works as a musician and singer for a local musical theater. He taught his son the art of playing the *rubob* and singing *qasīda*s. Today, his son performs at national events in Tajikistan. Recently, he performed a piece from the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire at the national music festival "Falak" among not only youths but also many other professional singers hailing from different regions of Tajikistan. Among all the singers, he received the award for the best *falak-khon* [*falak* singer]" of the year.

[176] Ibid.
[177] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies, An Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006; second ed.), 15.

Mamadali yet another father who takes seriously to had down a family tradition was himself raised in a family of *qasīda-khon*s. In his own words,

> *All the male members of my family are* qasīda-khon*s. My father Gadoali, my uncle Sadonsho, and my brothers are engaged in* qasīda-khonī*. If in the house a member of the family is a doctor other would like to be a doctor too, and if there is a teacher other will be teachers. So in my family, my father was a* qasīda-khon, *and my brothers and I inherited this* hunar *from him. My father used to gather us in the evenings and asked us to play the* rubob *and gave us the* qasīda*s to memorize. On many occasions, he would encourage us to join him when he was performing. So it has been now thirty-seven years that I sing* qasīda*s, and thanks to Allah so far I have not faced any problems in my life. My sons are now taking this* hunar *from me.*[178]

Under the patronage of his family members, Mamadali is now a recognized *qasīda-khon* in the GBAO. Mamadali's experience of becoming a *qasīda-khon* and his role as an *ustod* today shows that his identity as a *qasīda-khon* and an *ustod* of the *qasīda-khonī* was "constituted, learned, valued and revised in a distant past" and is recognized today through "stylized repetition of [his] action"[179] or performance. These days, Mamadali imparts his *hunar* and knowledge to his sons and also beyond his family circle by guiding many young people who want to become *qasīda-khon*. Today, the Pamirī -Ismaili youth who live in Dushanbe come to the Ismaili Centre to learn about *qasīda-khonī* from Mamadali, who teaches them voluntarily.

Aqnazar

Aqnazar, a *qasīda-khon* who works and resides in Dushanbe, also became a *qasīda-khon* through his family circle. Today he is prominent all over Tajikistan not only as a *qasīda-khon* but also as a renowned folk singer. Aqnazar described his life as split into two musical experiences: (a) a domestic experience related to ceremonies, where he learned and played within his family and

[178] Mamadali, interview, September 2011, Dushanbe.
[179] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal,* 40, No.4 (Dec. 1988): 519-520.

village; and (b) a public career in which he has worked for the musical theatre in Khorog, which included performing in national and international concerts.

Aqnazar was fascinated by *qasīda-khonī* from an early age and improved his skills for several years with the help and guidance of his neighbor Sultonazar in his village. He is now frequently called upon to sing at memorial gatherings and on Thursday and Friday evening prayers, where *qasīda-khonī* is required. Aqnazar as a vocalist has widened his horizons and firmly established an iconic status through a music ensemble known today as "Pamir Ensemble," not only as a "national representative" but also as representative of Central Asian folk culture and spirituality in international contexts. Today his brother Orzu and his son Chorshanbe are following his path and have also acquired a positive reputation among the admirers of *qasīda-khonī* and Tajik folk music in Tajikistan and Russia.

Chorshanbe, Aqnazar's fifteen-year-old son, has been involved in *qasīda-khonī* since he was seven years old. He became interested in *qasīda-khonī* by listening to his father, and he learned primarily by observing and imitating him. Every time his father performed at home, Chorshanbe would listen to him, and on many occasions, he would join his father and sing. He claims that he memorized all the texts included in his *qasīda-khonī* repertoire while accompanying his father at home. He is proud of himself for following in his father's footsteps and considers it an honor to do so. He resists many of his friends' views, who on many occasions discourage him and ask him to be take up what they consider to be "more useful" work, rather than singing *qasīda*s. He noted that:

> *My friends always ask me how far I will get in singing qasīda*s*. They tell me that I cannot earn anything from singing. They advise me to study science, computer science. But I like the music. I like singing.*[180]

[180] Chorshanbe Alowatov, interview, November 2011, Dushanbe.

Chorshanbe has been immersed in the practice of singing and has developed an abiding passion for it. Also, he considers it his duty to follow in his father's and his uncle's footsteps. What strikes him most when he watches his father's performances on television or hears someone play his father's recordings is a sense of pride and joy. When people learn that he is the son of Aqnazar, he is treated with respect and honor. Nowadays, Chorshanbe performs alongside his father at the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe on official occasions. He also performs during the evening prayers in the *jamoat-khona* without musical instruments. Aqnazar's son has obtained his position as a *qasīda-khon* among the Pamirī Ismailis in Dushanbe, and he is now considered by many as the best young *qasīda-khon* of the day.

Azizkhon Karimov and Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov

The experiences of these two *qasīda-khon*s differ from the ones I have discussed above. Azizkhon and Zaimkhon are two *qasīda-khon*s who dedicated their entire life to this art form, and unlike the *qasīda-khon*s mentioned above, they perform only on communal occasions.

Azizkhon entered the realm of *qasīda-khonī* by first learning how to play a musical instrument, namely the *rubob*. He was inspired by his maternal uncle Safarali, who was a teacher in Azizkhon's village. Safarali himself was not a *qasīda-khon,* but a good *rubob* player and Azizkhon referred to him on many occasions as a *mutrib* [musician].[181]

According to Azizkhon, his uncle Safarali would play the *rubob* every evening at their house after dinner. Azizkhon would sit next to his uncle and watch him play the instrument. When his uncle recognized Azizkhon's passion for the *rubob* and singing, he began to teach him. For Azizkhon, holding the instrument in his hand was very exciting, especially because children were usually not permitted to play with the *rubob*. As it was the only instrument in the house, his uncle and family

[181] *Mutrib* is a term used in the region to refer to a musician who plays plucked strings instruments.

elders feared that the children might break it and therefore would usually hang the instrument from a hard-to-reach place in the house. It was also considered a sacred instrument so that they deemed it inappropriate to give it to children to play with, as they may sully it by leaving it on the ground. Azizkhon indicated to me that,

> *It was always so high up in the house that I could not reach it. I always tried to pull it down while no one was in the house, but I always failed. One day my uncle saw me while I was trying to pile up all the pillows in order to climb them and reach the instrument. Seeing this, my uncle realized that I have a passion, so he started teaching me but cautioned me that I should be very careful with the instrument so as not to break it.*[182]

Holding the *rubob* for the first time made him so happy that from then on every evening, he would wait with anticipation to join his uncle. As he improved and learned some tunes, he also began to learn how to sing songs. These were the first sparks of inspiration that directed his trajectory towards becoming a *qasīda-khon*.

At one point, Azizkhon's uncle Safarali introduced the boy to Piruzsho, a renowned *qasīda-khon* at that time who was living in a village on top of the hill above Azizkhon's village. Safarali praised his nephew's skill in singing and his interest in the *rubob* to Piruzsho and asked him if he, Piruzsho, could accept him as a *shogird* [disciple]. Azizkhon became Piruzsho's disciple and learned the canon of *qasīda-khonī* from him. In this way, Azizkhon got his first instruction within his family and perfected his art under Piruzsho. Later he became a disciple of another *qasīda-khon*, Ashrafkhon, from Yamg village, 15 km to the east of Azizkhon's village. Azizkhon considers those who assisted him in becoming a *qasīda-khon* as his *ustod*s.

Azizkhon described his studies with Ashrafkhon as intense:

[182] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.

He gave me first the song texts to write, copy them from his bayoz*. Then he would ask me to memorize them and the next day, to recite it without looking at the paper. After that, he would teach me the melody in which I should sing it. In case I did not memorize the text correctly, he would not let me sing it with the* rubob*. Although I was good at memorization through music, I was only allowed to sing it if I memorized and recited the text correctly. Then, he would ask me to join him with singing the text accompanying musical instruments.* [183]

Today, Azizkhon is considered an *ustod* within his family and in the region. He is now imparting his art and knowledge to his son and grandson. Despite his son and grandson not referring to him as *malim* or *ustod* in everyday speech, he embodies a tripartite role of grandfather, father, and, when it comes to the learning of *qasīda-khonī,* as the first *ustod*. His son Jumakhon and his grandson Karim now accompany him at *qasīda-khonī* performances. Karim, who was fifteen years of age when I met him, accompanies his grandfather on the *rubob* for an hour in the evenings on an almost daily basis in their house after daily prayers, and sometimes also during the Friday prayers. On special occasions such as the day of the Imamate or the birthday of the Aga Khan, Karim Jumakhon also accompanies them.

Karim, however, does not perform during funeral ceremonies because according to his grandfather and his father, teenagers are not permitted to participate in mourning ceremonies. It is partially based on their custom that frowns upon people below the age of marriage attending funeral ceremonies, and partly the result of recent laws in Tajikistan which are restricting children under the age of eighteen from participating in religious practices and gatherings.[184]

[183] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.

[184] Mahkam Mahmudov and Abdurahim Kholiqov, *Tafsir-i Qonun-i Jumhuri-yi Tojikiston "Dar borayi tanzim-i an'ana va jashn-u marosimho dar Tojikiston*" [The Commentary on the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "About concerning regelation of customs and rituals in Tajikistan"] (Dushanbe: Sharq-i Ozod, 2008).

Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov[185] comes from Shitkharv village in Wakhan and has a similar experience as Azizkhon in regard to the process of becoming a *qasīda-khon* He acquired the title of *qasīda-khon* as a result of having been a student of Mulloshamsher-i Wakhonī.[186] Zaimkhon is a retired man in his seventies who plays this music every day in his home and performs during religious occasions and funeral ceremonies in his village and the surrounding areas. Concerning mourning ceremonies, he attends them without waiting for being invited. He feels that it is his responsibility to play music during mourning ceremonies. He earns his living by working his land and from the small amount of money he receives from his pension, and but receives nothing from his performances.

Zaimkhon acquired the knowledge of *qasīda-khonī* from his *ustod* Mulloshamsher, who was a local poet and a *qasīda-khon* himself. He lived in Zumudg village in Wakhan, 10-15 kilometers to the east of Zaimkhon's home village. Zaimkhon started practicing *qasīda-khonī* when he was twelve years of age. Once, while traveling with his father to a neighboring village, they stopped for the night at the home of Mulloshamsher, a friend of Zaimkhon's father. It was the custom in the past that, after consuming dinner, musicians would begin playing their instruments and sing, as a means of entertainment, as watching television, listening to the radio were not possible back then. The only means of entertaining guests, according to Zaimkhon, was by *qasīda-khonī* or by retelling fairy tales (*zhinda*). Zaimkhon's father asked Mulloshamsher to sing for them from his short *qasīda-khonī* repertoire. Zaimkhon enjoyed Mulloshamsher's singing, and the experience provided him with his first inspiration.

[185] See the photo of Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov in Appendix D.
[186] Mulloshamsher-i Wakhonī is a late nineteenth century poet, who lived in Zumudg village of Wakhan, and was the apprentice of the famous Sufi Muborak-i Wakhonī. For more details on Mulloshamsher-i Wakhonī, see A. Abibov, *Ganji Badakhshon* [Treasure of Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Adib, 1970).

When they returned home, Zaimkhon would continuously tell his father that he was interested in the art of *qasīda-khonī*, and thus, he became a disciple of Mulloshamsher and acquired the skills, knowledge, and experience from his *malim*. He considers all of this a blessing (*barakat*) that he received from his *ustod*:

> *During the process of learning, I learned not only how to play the instrument and sing the texts, but I learned why this music is essential, why these song texts* (matn) *are essential. The tunes* (nazm) *were very complex* (qin) *and were very difficult to play, so were the song texts. That is why not everybody is able to become a qasīda-khon. Some great musicians are not able to perform. One needs to have the patience to listen, to submit, and to be devoted. One needs to feel it. It comes from inside, from the heart. It is spiritual, and it is food for your soul.*[187]

Today Zaimkhon has many *shogird*s, including his sons and some other close relatives. Qaraboy, a brother-in-law of Zaimkhon, acknowledges that he acquired the art from Zaimkhon. He stated that each time Zaimkhon visited them, he would sing *qasīda*s in the evening and explain to them the meaning of the poetry he sang. Qaraboy was not a regular disciple of Zaimkhon, as they reside at a considerable distance from one another, but he received his collection of the poetry texts (*bayoz*) from Zaimkhon and therefore regarded him as his *ustod*. Although Qaraboy was not a regular disciple of Zaimkhon's and did not fully experience the *ustod-shogird* relationship, he acknowledges that without an *ustod,* it is not possible to become a *qasīda-khon*. As with the other *qasīda-khon*s, Qaraboi understands that to become a consummate *qasīda-khon* one must practice under an *ustod* for several years. "It is not possible to be involved in *qasīda-khonī* occasions as a *qasīda-khon* without having received the blessings of your *ustod*."[188] Qaraboy learned the skill of playing the *rubob* in his village, but to learn how to sing the song texts he would often go to Zaimkhon to ascertain whether or not he was singing them correctly. He remembers a situation in

[187] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.
[188] Qaraboy Nazaraliev, interview, November 2011, Shirgin village, Wakhan.

which he performed at a mourning ceremony and was criticized by the *khalīfa* for singing incorrectly. Since then, Qaraboy always consulted Zaimkhon before performing at an event.

Concerning this matter, Zaimkhon emphasized the importance of an *ustod* commenting on the performance of young *qasīda-khon*s today:

> *Many young people today do not want to have* ustod*. They do not have patience, because the* ustod *expects a lot from them. For example, my sons in many cases do not tolerate when I ask them to practice every day, to replay the music several times, or to memorize the song texts until they can sing them correctly.*[189]

According to Zaimkhon, his *ustod* always strongly insisted that he learn the long *qasīda*s. In saying "long *qasīda*s," Zaimkhon is referring not only to the genre of the *qasida* in a narrow sense, but also to any poetry that is a part of the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire. So, the song texts could be a *ghazal*, *daston*, *ruboyī,* or any other poetic form.[190] These long song texts are considered the most important texts for the performance and require a great effort by the performers to memorize.

We have noticed that the family tradition of learning is a significant part of the transmission of *qasīda-khonī*, which has been the mainstay for the survival of the practice. The *qasīda-khon*s acquire their initial skills through various ways in their families and pass them on to others through performance, live or recorded. The family is a place of learning demonstrates the manner in which *qasīda-khonī,* as an element of culture, is shaped within the system in which it has been created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved.

New Ways of Training in Qasīda-khonī

The re-establishment of religious institutions in the region after the downfall of the Soviet Union has contributed to the learning process of the *qasīda-khonī*. Apart from learning *qasīda-khonī* in

[189] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview November 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.
[190] The song texts will be discussed in Chapter four of this study.

the family, interested people now have a chance to learn it in the *jamoat-khona*s. Young people today, particularly those residing in urban areas, acquire the skills needed to become a *qasīda-khon* through religious institutions, where learning is based on the rules and regulations of the institution and instruction is provided by established *qasīda-khon*s. The implementation of these institutional norms has affected the ways in which the younger generations today learn how to practice *qasīda-khonī* and become a *qasīda-khon.* For instance, Mamadali, who became a *qasīda-khon* within his traditional family, is today engaged in teaching *qasīda-khonī* to young people at the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe.

I had the privilege of participating in Mamadali's *qasīda-khonī* class, which is not formally structured, but is conducted in a friendly and informal manner. It consists of eight to ten students, but due to significant interest, the number of participants increases by the day. Mamadali begins his class by asking the students if they have brought along any of the song texts of their collection while traditionally the master would have provided the song texts. After this, Mamadali requests each of the diciples to recite their texts. He checks the accuracy of the texts and selects one or two according to the themes and the content to be practiced. After choosing the texts, he sings one song text with one of the *qasīda-khonī* tunes but without accompaniment by musical instruments. Then he requests the students to join his singing. Mamadali focuses on whether the text is correct in content and rhyme. As an experienced *qasīda-khon*, he has memorized most of the song texts an; therefore, he senses immediately if there are any mistakes.

Transformations affected the learning practice of *qasīda-khonī*

The establishment of a Soviet music culture and later the post-Soviet political and cultural transitions happened in Tajikistan as they did elsewhere in the Soviet zone of influence. The transformations involved in these developments affected the practice of *qasīda-khonī, in particular,* the learning process connected with it. This was evident from my conversation with

Zaimkhon that was initially about the learning process within *qasīda-khonī* today. Zaimkhon's criticism and his disappointment with today's *qasīda-khon*s was in part based upon some changes in the learning process. According to Zaimkhon, the traditional *ustod-shogird* system was stable before Soviet Union, but its significance partially has eroded under the anti-religious and wider cultural policies of the USSR. Soviet cultural policy was implemented through different academic institutions such as the House of Culture (*Khona-yi Madaniyat*), the Institute of Arts (*Institut-i San'at*), and musical schools. These institutions introduced musical notation and new teaching methods which replaced the traditional *ustod-shogird* system of learning.

The forces of change have not destroyed all of the musicians' traditional roles, but they have generally undermined them because of these roles were associated with religion and its practice. The music of the *qasīda-khon*s, their musical instruments, and song texts were not part of the musical schools or any other state-run institutions' curricula. They continued to be integral part, however, of *qasīda-khonī* in the restricted family circle, in the community's secret ceremonies, and within the general context of communal life in the rural areas. Regardless of all state suppression, many established *qasīda-khon*s who had mastered the art of *qasīda-khonī* through the *ustod-shogird* system of, have followed and supported the *ustod-shogird* system throughout the Soviet period until today.

The revival of religious consciousness after the fall of the Soviet Union has caused individuals in the region to honor the *ustod-shogird* system as an institution and to strive to preserve and promote it. The "School of Religious Poetry" (*Maktab-i ash'or-i mazhabī*), an initiative of personal dedication and commitment of Otambek Mastibekov to the practice, is operating today. The school aims to preserve and maintain the traditional model of learning *qasīda-khonī*. It brings together masters from various regions of the GBAO in Khorog offering space for them to gather and share their experiences, views, and music. Although this is in the Pamirs considered a great initiative, the

school can not support all practitioners alike. Due to financial restrictions the school only invites a small number of *qasīda-khon*s, who mainly come from Khorog and its neighboring towns. Many masters who live in more remote areas are unlikely ever to get the chance to participate in these gatherings, to share their experiences, or to learn from others. The school does not play a role in sustaining and encouraging *qasīda-khonī*, but these efforts are not sufficient to preserve the art form as such since they privilege the most prestigious performers and do not provide conditions necessary for developing and valorizing the practice of *qasīda-khonī* in remote areas.

Qasīda-khonī on the Local and the International Contexts

Musical culture in Tajikistan witnessed a period of decline after the fall of the Soviet Union. The civil war sowed chaos in all spheres of life and many of the musicians and singers from the GBAO who lived in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, fled the war and took refuge in their homeland, the Pamirs. People faced famine and hardship, which unsurprisingly affected the musical culture as well. With the intervention of international humanitarian assistance organizations such as the Agha Khan Development Network (AKDN), Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), and the World Food Programme (WFP), people's lives finally returned to normalcy. Following this, local musicians and singers got interested in reviving their musical heritage and reformed the "*Ansambl-i Pomīr*" [The Pamir Ensemble]. This ensemble was initiated by Sohiba Davlatshoeva, who had grown up in a small village in Ghund valley, 80 km from Khorog. She described her experience of that time in this way:

> *We created this ensemble ourselves. It was not a state-sponsored group. We all were students at the Institute of Arts in Dushanbe in the 1980s. When the Civil War (1992-1997) broke out we left for our region Badakhshan. Then we all worked as musicians in the local theatre in Khorog. Since many of us are very talented and know old music and songs very well, we decided to reform this group.*[191]

[191] Sohiba Davlatshoeva, interview, September 2011, Dushanbe.

Since the ensemble's repertoire included a variety of musical styles and genres, they played (and continue to play) a distinct role in the community in social terms as well as cultural ones. Their music-making extended beyond the local theatre, as they provided music for wedding festivities, birthday parties, cultural and community celebrations; later on they also played on various national and international stages.

Since religious customs and practices have a strong influence on the Pamirī expressive culture, *qasīda-khonī* was included in the ensemble's musical program, which brought them to the international musical stage. Aqnazar and Olucha, members of the Pamir Ensemble, performed *qasīda-khonī* at the Festival of World Sacred Music in Fez, Morocco, in 2007 and at the Konya International Mystic Music Festival in September 2014. Sohiba even danced during the performance, although it is rare to do so during *qasīda-khonī* in the Pamirī religious tradition. On occasions such as these festivals, *qasīda-khon*s represent Tajikistani national identity by wearing "traditional" costumes, sharing "traditional" dances, and playing their religious music.

The role of *qasīda-khons* on the national and world stage is different from the part they have home in the Pamirs. Abroad, they are introduced as members of an ensemble that performs devotional songs of Badakhshan as well as "traditional Tajik music." Aqnazar emphasized that he is presented as a singer from Tajikistan, not as a *qasīda-khon* from the Pamirs. He noted that "in concert I perform, but I do not serve." In communal contexts, the *qasīda-khon*s perform to serve the community, while on stage they perform to introduce culture and to entertain audiences with whom otherwise they do not share intentions, content or context. Aqnazar identifies himself as a singer and a *qasīda-khon* based on his intensified connection to his community, his respect to place and context, and his participation in a shared communal practice that shapes his identity.

On the international stage, the degree to which *qasīda-khon*s have become cultural icons at the service of cultural politics can be further gauged from the inclusion of their performances in

different national and international cultural concerts and political events. For instance, in the bilateral cultural cooperation between Tajikistan and France, within the framework of participation of representatives of Tajik art, Tajik artists performed in France and met with former president of France Jacques Chirac in October 2005. Aqnazar Alowatov and Sohiba Davlatshoeva were on that occasion awarded a medal from the French government for their performance at the great Paris Opera.[192] He was presented on the world stage as a Tajik artist. They have thus earned respect, and their reputation has extended from their community to a much wider social, political, and cultural arena.

While the performance of the new *qasīda-khons* is appreciated as "national cultural heritage" at cultural events both nationally, and internationally they come under criticism by the practitioners who perform *qasīda-khonī* in strictly religious communal gatherings. These critics feel a sense of loss when facing the practice today. Many of the old-style practitioners do have a feeling that due to the introduction of modern music the younger generations who have become exposed to various genres of pop music, have no interest in customary music. I could sense this view when I met Azizkhon Karimov for the first time. He was happy to know that I was researching *qasīda-khonī* since he feels the practice is fast disappearing due to various forces. Young people of the region, who are exposed to modern music and electric musical instruments have almost no interest in *qasīda-khonī.* The state law on the restriction of ritual practices which limits the duration of ritual performances[193] allows little time for the *qasīda-khon*s to perform. Post-Soviet national and international identity politics and the shift of *qasīda-khonī* to concert halls are the main concerns

[192] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Tajik French Relations," last accessed on 28 August 2016, available at: http://www.tajembfrance.fr/about/tajik-french-relations.
[193] See *Qonun-i Jumhuri-yi Tojikiston dar borayi Tanzim-i an'ana va jashn-u marosimho* [The law of Tajikistan Republic on regulations of traditions, customs and festivals] 8th June 2007: last accessed on 30 August 2016, available at: http://www.vfarhang.tj/kcfinder/upload/files/dar_borai_tanzimi_anana_va_chashnu_marosim.pdf.

for Azizkhon when he laments the disappearance of the "true" practice. He ironically considers the "authentic" practice part of "world tradition" and emphasizes that:

> *If qasīda-khonī disappears, then one part of the world tradition* (sunnat-i olam*) is lost. I am glad that young people like you are interested in* qasīda-khonī.[194]

Regardless of Azizkhon's rejection of the novel modes, he is himself under the influence of this "novel thinking." The idea of "world tradition" is part and parcel of folklorist culture politics, first on the international then on the national stages. Azizkhon's reflection on the loss of *qasīda-khonī* in his understanding brings out two aspects of the problem: one is the loss of the practice, or it is no longer being performed traditionally, and the other is a lack of in-depth knowledge among *qasīda-khons* themselves. The comments of Azizkhon and many other *qasīda-khon*s who share his attitude lead us to understand the different perceptions that shape the general understanding of *qasīda-khons* and their experiences in different contexts today. Azizkhon and Zaimkhon, for instance, having been trained in the traditional manner, do not regard the new generation as "real" *qasīda-khon*s. They question the substantiality of innovations and voice their disappointment and disagreement openly. They discuss their craft and demonstrate the intricacies of the learning process that a *qasīda-khon* has to undergo. They view the prestige of their performance and their position in the community in relation to their masters, their learning process and the journey they undertook by rehearsing, reproducing and redoing, a process which Schechner calls being "twice behaved."[195] As observed through the voices I have presented here, all the practitioners are committed to their performance, but they take different positions concerning the key elements of what they respectively call the tradition. On the other hand they all strive to keep the art alive and transmit the genre and the recognition of its inherent values to future generations.

[194] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.
[195] Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 45.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the status and significance of the *qasīda-khon* has evolved in relation to the performance context across the crucial Soviet-post-Soviet divide. *Qasīda-khon*s in the *jamoat-khona*s and on stage cannot wholly replace the *qasīda-khon*s of the mourning ceremonies since their repertoires differ tremendously, and their status in the community and outside is different. The *qasīda-khon*s of mourning ceremonies perform more serious song texts consisting of narratives and stories, which require intention, attention, and time. The repertoire of the stage *qasīda-khon*s is, by comparison, short and more joyful and playful. *Qasīda-khon*s perform during life cycle events play the musical instrument and sing at the same time; however, *qasīda-khon*s in *jamoat-khona*s only sing and chant. Apart from these differences there is a certain degree of hierarchies enforced by economic pressures, opportunities, geographic isolation and success that shaped the status of the *qasīda-khon*s in the community today.

Of the *qasīda-khon*s that exist today, few have gained what could be considered substantial success. Their reputations define their success as performers of the genre inside and outside of their homeland. The *qasīda-khon*s who consider themselves less successful are often geographically marginalized, which distances them from more extensive cultural networks and results in their not being able to make their performance reach wider audiences. For instance, Azizkhon and Zaimkhon's reputation is only known within the community; therefore, they have fewer opportunities to be recorded or invited to perform at international events. They also wish to be recorded and have their performances available for wider audiences. Performers living in proximity to the capital or other urban centers, like Aqnazar, are afforded greater opportunity to participate in cultural activities promoted and sponsored by the local governments, which involve telecast of television programs, and recordings on CDs, DVDs, and audio cassettes.

Despite the transformations in the images of *qasīda-khon*s described in this chapter, they remain essential figures whether in religious, social, or cultural settings. They are key figures in social and cultural activities. They are the vehicles on which various Pamiri communities carry forward their collective memories, oral histories, religious rituals, and culture of their communities. Their identity is defined by the distinct role they play in society and their contribution to ceremonial events.

Chapter 4: The Spaces and Contexts of *Qasīda-khonī*

Qasīda-khonī generates multiple meanings and perceptions in the many social and cultural contexts and spaces in which it is performed. The particular context of each specific performance serves as a point of reference for the performers, which in turn shapes the significance of each *qasīda-khonī* performance, be it the more traditional or modernized version. These social and cultural contexts are where the actions of performers and participants are structured, patterned, formalized, and transformed. The various meanings and perceptions that are generated from the performances result in *qasīda-khonī* not being simply a unified musical genre or a single religious ritual practice anymore, but instead multifaceted, with performers playing the role of different agents or actors in particular spaces and contexts.

In this chapter, I describe and discuss the performance of *qasīda-khonī* in contrasting places and contexts, and present a framework to explain the significance of *qasīda-khonī* in its diverse manifestations. The context serves to indicate "not only the quality of the performance but the nature of the human [performers and audiences] behavior enacted."[196] In Bauman's words, "like all human activity, its form, meaning, and functions are rooted in culturally defined scenes or events – bounded segments of the flow of behavior and experience that constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation."[197] Studying the *qasīda-khonī* performance in context is a fundamental starting point of analysis for understanding *qasīda-khonī* as a socially and culturally significant activity. It helps us to understand the performers and participants' identities and roles; the expressive means employed in the performance; the changes and continuity in the performance

[196] Marcia Herndon and Norma McLeod, *Music as culture* (Darby, Pa: M.R.L., 1990), 26.
[197] Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

tradition; the social rules of interaction; and the norms and strategies for performance, its interpretation, and evaluation, as well as the sequencing of the performative actions.

The performance of *qasīda-khonī* – the music, the song lyrics, the performers, and their interpretation and understanding of the *qasīda*s – is a dimension that establishes *qasīda-khonī*'s meaning. Supplementing this aspect is the factor of where the performance is undertaken and the audience for it, be it the funeral ceremonies at home or in the *jamoat-khona*, or on the modern stage. Each performance has unique characteristics that depend on the circumstances in which the performance is undertaken. These phenomena are explored below.

Qasīda-khonī in Mourning Ceremonies

Musical performances are a ubiquitous feature of social gatherings in the Pamirs. They serve specific social functions and mark special occasions within community life, such as welcoming a visitor, blessing a home, celebrating birthdays and weddings, framing funeral ceremonies, and celebrating days of religious importance. Through these musical occasions, characteristic features such as patterns of shared activities and hospitality of the Pamirī Ismaili society are on display and an important social milieu is generated for people to meet each other and to share joy and festivities, but also sorrow and grief.

The inclusion of *qasīda-khonī* in the funeral ceremonies of Pamirī Ismailis provides perhaps the most telling illustration of their social function in particular settings. *Qasīda-khonī* serve to comfort the bereaved and assert the worth of life despite the inevitability of death, to express hope through music and singing, to guide the dead to their permanent abode, and to affirm transcendent realities believed in by the community. In order to fully understand the social function of *qasīda-khonī* performances at funeral ceremonies, it is necessary to engage in a more thorough exploration of the context of Pamirī funeral ceremonies.

Mourning Ceremonies in the GBAO and the Role of Qasīda-khonī

Funeral ceremonies in the GBAO are typically marked by the congregation of mourners from across the region, first and foremost relatives and friends of the deceased and their family. In Badakhshan, funeral ceremonies vary by sub-region in terms of customs, rites, and terminology. In Shughnan a funeral is referred to as *dawat,* while in the Wakhan and Ishkashim districts it is known as *marka* or *maraka*.[198]

As discussed in the first chapter, *da'wa* was the propagation of Ismaili faith in Fatimid time and after. It is said that Nāṣir-i Khusraw used occasions such as funeral ceremonies to preach the Ismaili doctrine. Over time, the term *dawat,* which is derived from *da'wa* has come to be employed by the Pamirī Ismailis in Shughnan to refer to funeral ceremonies. The habitual elements in the mourning ceremonies in the Pamirs are attributed to Nāṣir-i Khusraw's influence. These elements, which also include the performance of *qasīda-khonī*, are put into practice because people want to fulfill their responsibility to properly send off the deceased so that he or she does not remain behind to trouble the living. Efforts of the entire family and the surrounding community are required to correctly follow all the customs and rites so that the soul of the deceased may rest in peace. It is commonly believed that if the bereaved err, the deceased's spirit might disturb the family and others, who were involved in the process, through illness and misfortune.[199]

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[198] *Marka* or *maraka* is a local modified word of the original Arabic word *ma'raka,* meaning a square, an open place or a place of gathering. For the Arabic meaning of the word see the online dictionary *Parsi Wiki, s.v.* "**معرکه**", accessed November, 2015, https://www.parsi.wiki/fa/wiki/402694/%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%B1%DA%A9%D9%87?fbclid=IwAR3n9FhJNoQNZstmBjw5Py9KzGK0PWR52pzEFLGmlRXiCcd8Yiu9RVCiDZw.

[199] For ethnographic details of funeral ceremonies in Badakhshan, see T.S. Kalandarov and A.A. Shoinbekov, "Some Historical aspects of Funeral Rites among People of Western Pamir," *Anthropology of Middle East*, Vol.3, No. 1, (2008): 67-81; doi: 10.3167/ame.2008.03.01.07, available at: http://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/ame/3/1/ame030107.xml, last accessed September 2014; M.S. Andreev, *Tadjiki doliny Khuf. Vyp. 1* [Tajiks of the Khuf Valley, Vol.1] (Stalinabad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR, 1953); and T.S. Kalandarov*, Shugnancy*: *Istoriko-etnograficheskoe issledovanie* [Shugnanis: A Historical and Ethnographic Study] (Moscow: Stariy Sad, 2004).

The family members of the deceased, close relatives, neighbors, the *khalīfa* (the local religious leader who guides the whole ceremony), and the *qasīda-khon*s are present at the mourning ceremony. In contrast to other performance events to be discussed below, not all members of the community are allowed to observe *qasīda-khonī* performances at the mourning ceremonies. For example, only adults are permitted to the ceremonies, while young and the single are expected not to attend. In an interview for this study, Zaimkhon emphasized that "this is not music for enjoyment. It is music for reflection. Many young people are not ready to comprehend such things."[200] In the case of religious festivals, by contrast, all are welcome to attend; and in the case of private gatherings, attendance is, of course, limited to invitees.

The number of *qasīda-khon*s performing at a mourning ceremony is dependent on the social status of the deceased. If the deceased was an important member of the community, there are often several performers present during the ceremonies, taking turns or sometimes performing together throughout the night. During *qasīda-khonī* at mourning ceremonies, usually four to five performers sit together with their legs crossed, facing each other or in a row. The performers cover their heads and wear casual clothes, and sit in a place especially assigned for their performance. After they finish their performance, the participants call out "*Yā 'Alī Haq"*[Oh Ali, The Truth], *"Guyo Boshed*" [Be always sound, and "*Salomat boshed"* [Be healthy!] in honor of the *qasīda-khon*s' performance.

At mourning ceremonies in Badakhshan, *qasīda-khonī* starts from the first day of the community member's death, and then continues for a week or sometimes a month. It is performed before the burial of the dead body[201] and after. If there is a *qasīda-khon* in the village, he comes to the house of the deceased without being invited. In situations where there is no *qasīda-khon* in the village, a

[200] Zaimkhon, Shitkharv, interview, October 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.
[201] In case the death happened late in the evening, the body remains in the house until the next day.

person from the village will be asked to summon a *qasīda-khon* from one of the neighboring villages. In some places in the GBAO, for instance in Bartang, the dead body is accompanied to the grave with *qasīda-khonī* singing,[202] but this does not appear to be a common practice elsewhere.

After the burial, the mourners return to the house of the family of the deceased and the recitation of the Qur'an starts, mostly led by the *khalīfa* but with all mourners present. This process carries on until evening. Then *qasīda-khonī* begins again, and continues through the night until morning. That night is called the 'sleepless night' (*shab-i nakhusp*) in Wakhan, and those present in the house are expected not to sleep. Azizkon explained to me that when a person dies, his soul remains in the house for one day until *qasīda-khonī* and the ritual called *charogh-rawshan* [luminous lamp] is performed; this is also confirmed by Elnazarov.[203]

The ritual of *charogh-rawshan* is considered by the Pamirī Ismailis to be obligatoryand should be performed on the second day after death. The process begins with a communal recitation of the Persian/Tajik liturgy known as the *Charoghnoma*, which comprises of Qur'anic verses, stories about the prophets and Imams, and supplications and instructions attributed to Nāṣir-i Khusraw.[204] During this recitation, the *khalīfa* prepares a lamp wick (*pilta*) from cotton. When the lamp wick is ready, it is dipped in oil and lights it. The lamp is then brought to the members of the family and

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[202] *Poy-i Amal* [Dance of Death], DVD, produced and supported by the Aga Khan Humanities Project for Central Asia (Dushanbe: Kinoservice Ltd, 2004).

[203] Hakim Elnazarov, "Chiragh-i Rawshan," in *Encyclopaedia Islamica,* Editors-in-Chief:. Wilferd Madelung and Farhad Daftary (last accessed online on 17 September 2015).

[204] A. Shohkhumorov, "Svyashenaya Lampada," [The Sacred Lamp], in *Nāsir-i Khusraw: dīrūz, imrūz, fardā* [Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow], ed. S. Niyozov and R. Nazariev (Khujand: Noshir, 2005), 656-670; A. Shohkhumorov, "Charoghrawshan – sunnat-i oriyoyī va Ismoilī-i mardum-i Badakhshān " [Luminous lamp is the tradition of the Ariyans and the Ismaili people of Badakhshan] *Mas'alaho-yi Pomirshinosī*, 5 (Dushanbe: Donish, 2003), 149-150; A.E. Bertels, "Nazariyot-i barkhe az urafo va shi'īyon-i isnoasharī roje' ba arzīsh-i meros-i adabī-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw" [The view of some Mystics and Twelvers on the value of Nasir-i Khusraw's works], *Yodnoma-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw*, Mashhad (1976): 107-108; Umed Shohzodamuhammad, "Ritual zazhiganie svetilnika. Islamsko-ismailitskiy obichay" [Lamp Lighting. An Islamic Ismaili Custom], in *Nāṣir-i Khusraw: dīrūz, imrūz, fardo*; Omed Shahzade-Mohammad, "Sunnat-i 'charogh-rawshan-kuni"-yi Ismoiliyon-i Osiyo-yi Markazi [The Custom of Lighting the Lamp of the Ismailis of Central Eurasia], *Rudaki*, 7, No.10 (2006): 43-52; and Umed Mamadsherzodshoev, *Manobei sunnati Charoghrawshan* [The Basis of Lighting the Lamp Tradition] (Dushanbe: Merosi Ajam, 2009).

relatives of the deceased. They touch the lamp with their hands and bring them to their faces three times, and pray for the soul of the deceased.[205]

Azizkhon explained the meaning of this ritual and its connection to the performance of *qasīda-khonī* in this way:

> *When a person dies, his or her soul is still in the house for a day, because the soul is not yet ready to depart. It is not purified.* Qasīda-khonī *is played to purify the soul and the light is lit to help to cleanse the path ahead for the soul.*[206]

In this context, *qasīda-khonī* is used as a proper way of sending off the deceased in such a way that their soul is brought to peace and harmony. In addition, the practitioners believe that the soul of human beings enters this world and encounters many things; people commit sins and their soul becomes unclean along with mistakes they made in their lifetime. When they die, the soul must be cleansed before it unites with its origin. Zaimkhon explains:

> *Life is a sequence of rises and falls. When the soul comes to this world, it encounters many things. Sometimes it makes mistakes and sometimes it does right things. We have to deal with a lot of problems and we have to find and understand what is right for us and what is wrong. There are challenges that one needs to overcome. Life's path is not smooth, and you cannot just go straight ahead and reach your wishes. In order to achieve success or fulfill your wishes, you need to go through all these vicissitudes in life.*[207]

After *charogh-rawshan,* food is served before the *qasīda-khonī* is resumed, and again the performance continues throughout the night, with an interlude during which the men take a rest while the women perform songs of lamentation. Referred to as *beparvo falak* [reckless universe] in Shughnan,[208] and *sifat* [attribute] or *nowagarī* [monody] in Wakhan, these songs of lament are

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[205] In addition to my observation of funeral ceremonies in Badakhshan, there is a documentary DVD available in the library of the University of Central Asia called "Sacred Traditions in Sacred Places," produced and supported by The Christensen Fund and Aga Khan Humanities Project for Central Asia, (Dushanbe: Kinoservice Ltd, 2005), which complements my observations.
[206] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, October 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.
[207] Zaimkhon, interview, October 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.
[208] N. Shakarmamadov, "Falak - az surudho-i mardumī" [Falak a popular song], *Payom-i Donishgoh-i Khorugh* Vol. 2, No. 4 (2002): 75-85.

mostly composed by women in a mix of Persian and local languages and are sung in praises of good deeds of the deceased.

Some people consider *qasīda-khonī* to be only an elegiac performance because it is mostly practiced in the context of mourning ceremonies. According to them, the performance reminds them of the time of death, mourning and funeral, and specifically the death of a person. They do not see it as meaningful or helpful, as the *qasīda-khon*s and other participants suggest. For instance, Nazira Mawlonqulova, a teacher whom I met in Dushanbe described her experience in this way:

> *I don't like* qasīda-khonī. *I don't listen to it and I don't want to listen to it, because it reminds me of funeral ceremonies and death. Once, I remember, I participated in a funeral ceremony of my neighbour and the performance of* qasīda-khonī *started and I felt so bad. Since then whenever I listen to the* qasīda-khonī*, I always remember that person and regret that she is not with us and I feel very sad. That's why I don't like it.*[209]

Nazira's view possibly reflects that of a generation educated in Soviet schools in an environment that discouraged religious practices. Ritual performances in general then were more limited and *qasīda-khonī* was only performed during mourning ceremonies at that time.

Texts for Qasīda-khonī at Mourning Ceremonies

A distinguishing feature of *qasīda-khonī* in mourning ceremonies is what texts are chosen for the occasion.[210] The song texts that are sung during the performance belong to various poetic genres, including prayer and narrative. They are often lengthy, with heavily religious content. Many of them focus on miracles of Imam Ali and on his generosity. For instance, one of the texts is called *Panj Kishtī* [Five Ships], a story about the miracle of Ali.[211] This tale is part of Zaimkhon's

[209] Nazira Mavlonqulova, a teacher, interviewed on 5 August 2008 in Dushanbe.
[210] For more details about sung poetry in Badakhshan, see Gabrielle Rachel van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004).
[211] I will discuss the full story of the text and the connection between the texts and religious worldviews of the Pāmīrī Ismā'īlīs in more detail in Chapter 5.

repertoire and he stated that he sings it only at mourning ceremonies and other religious events. Stories as such are important for the *qasīda-khonī* performance; they are very important for the Pamirī Ismailis from a doctrinal point of view. Zaimkhon emphasized that:

> *I sing the Panj Kishtī during the mourning ceremonies, to console the family of the deceased and all the people who are present. It tells us that we should not worry because we have the Imam who is always alive and there to help us. This story gives us hope and encourages us to bear our misfortune easily because there is Imam Ali, who will care and look after us. As the story goes, Imom Ali saved ships and the people from drowing in the sea on their way to China. He will save us as well from any misfortune. If we have īmon [belief] we will never be in trouble.*[212]

These stories consciously and unconsciously assert the belief system of the Pamirī Ismailis; in particular, the esoteric (*botinī*) meanings of texts and practices, and offer invaluable insights into the dynamics of experiencing and understanding *qasīda-khonī*. According to Zaimkhon:

> *We cannot sing these qasoids on stage as a song. They have a special meaning and importance during funeral ceremonies. People will not understand what they mean, when sung on the stage.*[213]

From Zaimkhon and Azizkhon's words one understands that the significance of the texts sung is derived from the context in which they are sung. The songs are demonstrative of how people understand their religious beliefs and practices and the way in which they deal with their sorrow and grief. Therefore, these texts are considered by the performers to be "special texts" (*matnho-yi makhsūs*) that should only be sung during funeral ceremonies and other religious occasions. Azizkhon emphasized that "If someone sings these 'special texts' in concert, he makes a big mistake. They are not songs. These texts are meant for religious purposes only."[214]

Aqnazar, who performs *qasīda-khonī* mostly at stage concerts, expressed similar views on the song texts. He indicated that:

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[212] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, October 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Azizkhon, interview, October 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.

> *Texts such as the Five Ships, Five Brothers (Panj Ikhvon), the Rotten Skull (*Kalla-yi Pusida*), etc. are "special texts" that can be performed only at mourning ceremonies and religious occasions. In concerts such texts will make no sense. They are religious and very long and on stage we cannot sing for a long duration.*[215]

The distinguishing mark placed by the *qasīda-khon*s on the song texts in relation where they are performed is derived from their understanding of their faith and its rituals. These texts serve to articulate "regional internalized icons and encode associated with the places, the experience of communal social life, the belief system," that could be perceived as "cultural authenticities."[216] Susan Sontag's notes remind in relation to photography, that "always an object in context and their moral and emotional weight depends on where it is inserted,"[217] can also be applied to *qasīda-khonī* texts, a point, which I will explore in more detail in Chapter 5.

Duration of Qasīda-khonī at Mourning Ceremonies

A unique characteristic of *qasīda-khonī* as part of the mourning ceremonies is its duration. Traditionally, a *qasīda-khonī* performance is lengthy. During the first day of mourning, it lasts throughout the night, with a small interlude of women's *falak* performance. The shortest *qasīda-khonī* performance during a mourning ceremony is between 20 and 25 minutes per cycle. There are many cycles throughout the night and the performers alternate to perform in each cycle individually or together. The duration of the performance is a matter of great importance during mourning ceremonies. The longer the performance, the better it is assessed and appreciated by the community. If the performance does not last for long, it is not only considered a failure on the part of the *qasīda-khon*s but also is regarded as disrespectful to both the soul and the family of the

[215] Aqnazar Alowatov, interview, September 2011, Dushanbe.
[216] Federico Spinetti, "Open Borders, Tradition and Tajik Popular Music: Questions of Aesthetics, Identity and Political Economy," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 14, No.2 (November, 2005): 202; http://www.jstor.org/stable/20184518 (last accessed on 15 June 2014).
[217] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York and London: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), 82.

deceased. For instance, Marambek shared his experience of witnessing a performance of *qasīda-khonī*, which he considered to be a failure:

> *Usually, in one cycle of* qasīda-khonī *sit five to six performers in mourning ceremonies. However, at that ceremony, I witnessed that only two* qasīda-khon*s were present. The performance continued for a few hours but with many intervals. Some participants left the house in the middle of the performance. Some were sleeping. A few people were awake in the house including the family and relatives of the deceased. The* qasīda-khon*s were not very good. They could not sing for long because they did not know what to sing. They sang the same* qasoid *two or three times. Most of the time the women were singing* falak. Qasīda-khon*s should not engage in such occasions if they are not ready. They disrespect themselves and the others who are present.* [218]

Similar comments were also made by the *qasīda-khon*s themselves. They agreed that a *qasīda-khon* should always be well prepared when attending mourning ceremonies. A mourning ceremony is a communal gathering and the *qasīda-khon*s are recognized as especially capable when they can engage the gathering and raise the spirits of the community. They must behave in a manner considered to be socially acceptable, for instance not to drink alcohol, smoke, gossip etc. *Qasīda-khon*s believe that performers should have memorized a catalogue of many poems in order to be able to meet the needs of the community. Kholmamad, a *qasīda-khon* from Shughnan, reiterated this point:

> *When we go to a mourning ceremony we should be ready. We should know what we have to perform. It is a long night and for that we are expected to keep the people awake. We should learn by heart so many texts as to meet the expectations of the community*.[219]

[218] Marambek Kholmamadov, interview, October 2011, Tughgoz village, Wakhan.
[219] Kholmamad, interview, November 2011, Khorog.

Musical Instruments used in Qasīda-khonī at Mourning Ceremonies

Another distinguishing feature of the *qasīda-khonī* performance in the mourning setting is the musical instruments are played. While different musical instruments are used and played in the Pamirs for *qasīda-khonī* performances, on these occasions, the choice of instruments is restricted. The performers play only the *rubob*, *tanbūr*, *balandzikom,* string lutes and the *daf,* frame drum at mourning ceremonies.

The instruments mentioned above are crafted from various animal parts. Sheep or goat skin, for example, is used for instruments that resonate and the guts are used for the strings of the instruments. Sheep and goats were important in Neolithic cultures across many geographic areas. They played an important role in religious practices and especially within the cults of the Pamirs, the Hindukush, and the North-Western Himalayan ranges. These practices, which traveled with the extensive migration of Indo-Aryan tribes, are still widely practiced in various parts of the world,[220] and have a resonance in Central Asia, too.[221] This culture has influenced expressive arts, such as music and dance in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan[222] as well as in northern Afghanistan.[223] In many parts of Badakhshan, the sheep is widely believed to be a sacred animal and it is sacrificed on many occasions, such as the religious holiday of *Qurbon* (*ʻĪd Al-Aḍhā*); while building a new

[220] Maria Schetelich, "Sheep and goat in the religious beliefs of Rgvedic people," in *Wissenschaftsgeschichte und gegenwärtige Forschungen in Nordwest-Indien: internationales Kolloquium vom 9. bis 13. März 1987*, *Herrnhut*, eds. Lydia Icke-Schwalbe and Gudrun Meier (Dresden: Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde Dresden Forschungsstelle, 1990), 90–99; Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Elena Efimovna Kuz'mina, *The Origin of Indo-Iranians*, ed. J.P. Mallory (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

[221] B.L. Litvinskiy, "Tadzhikistan i India. Primery Drevnykh Svyazey i kontaktov" [Tajikistan and India. Evidence of Ancient Relations and Contacts], in *India v Drevnosti* [Ancient India] ed. V.V., Struve and G.M. Bongard-Levina (Moscow: Nauka 1964): 143-165; and B.L. Litvinskiy, *Drevniye Kochevniki Krishy Mira* [Ancient Nomads of the Roof of the World] (Moscow: Nauka, 1972).

[222] Nurjanov has linked Tajik pantomime dances depicting the hunting of goats to ritual significance. See Nizom Nurjanov, *Olam-i Bekanor-i Raqs-i Tojik (ocherk-i ta'rīkhī - nazarī)* [The Boundless World of Tajik Dance (a historico-theoretical essay)] (Dushanbe: Mega Basim Yayin San.Ltd., 2004), 69-100; Nizam Nurjanov, "Tajik folk theater and puppetry," *Asian Music*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Afghanistan Issue 1976): 65-77.

[223] Mark Slobin, "Buz-bazi: A Musical Marionette of Northern Afghanistan," *Asian Music* (1975): 217-224.

house, especially when the main pillars are installed in a Pamirī house; and at the arrival of a bride before she enters her new home.

Sheep gut is prepared for the instrument which is played the most during the mourning ceremonies. The instruments that have gut strings are considered to be "instruments of paradise" (*bihishtī*) and the instruments that have metal strings are referred to as "instruments of hell" (*dūzakhī*).[224] Therefore, metal-stringed instruments are considered inappropriate for religious music and are not be played during mourning ceremonies. Nurjanov, who conducted his fieldwork in the 1970s, mentions that the Pamīris consider "the voice of the metal string instruments the groaning of sinful people in hell and therefore they should be played less."[225] This idea is prevalent among older generations of the *qasīda-khon*s, i.e. performers who were born in the late 1930s and 1940s. However, performers from the younger generation who have grown up exposed to electronic music and instruments have created different values that embrace both traditional local musical genres and various contemporary, global music genres and instruments. They are, thus, not fully aware of such classifications, and are vocally unconcerned with such implications.

The *qasīda-khonī* performance at mourning ceremonies only involves the *rubob* and *daf*, and excludes any dancing, clapping, shouting, or the use of microphones. In contrast to *qasīda-khonī* performed at mourning ceremonies, *qasīda-khonī* performed at happy occasions does involve musical groups blending traditional instruments such as the Pamirī *rubob*, *tanbūr*, *balandzikom ghizhak,* (violin) and *daf* with acoustic, electric, and bass guitars, keyboards, and synthesizers. For the traditionalists, performers who combine different musical instruments and genres in their

[224] Nizom Nurjanov, F. Karomatov, *Muzikal'noye Iskusstvo Pamira* [Musical Arts of the Pamirs], Vol. 1 (Moscow: Sovetskiy Kompozitor, 1978): 12.
[225] Ibid.

performance otherwise are acceptable, but their artistic production is not recognized a *qasīda-khonī*, as such mixing is not considered to be fit for religious and mourning contexts.

An additional aspect of differentiation between the two contexts of the *qasīda-khonī* performance is aesthetic in nature. During mourning ceremonies, there are no decorations and no special clothes for the performers, as there are for other religious and cultural ceremonies. The performers are dressed in casual clothes. As for other performances of *qasīda-khonī*, the performers wear local dress and dance. The performance, likewise, is more pared down without dancing, clapping, or the use of microphones.

Community Reception and Qasīda-khonī at Mourning Ceremonies

Many observers of *qasīda-khonī* during mourning ceremonies agree that the performance helps them in controlling their emotions, suppressing negative feelings of anger and bitterness, and conserving physical energy. Lutfiya, a woman in her twenties who lost her brother at a young age, shared her personal feelings, telling me that during the mourning the only thing that soothed her pain was the sound of the *rubob* and the singing of the *qasīda-khon*s: "It somehow penetrates your soul and makes you feel calm (*orom*)."[226]

This phenomenon of "sharing a moment of sorrow or happiness" is visible in the engagement of community members in various tasks associated with communal ceremonies. Most community members are involved in these ceremonies; they divide responsibilities and tasks among themselves, especially when there is a wedding ceremony or a mourning. For instance, in villages in the Wakhan, community members are divided into groups to cook food and bring it to the home

[226] Lutfiya Mamadsafoeva, interview, 15 November 2011, Khorog.

of the deceased. All members of the community contribute and share according to their capacity. The *qasīda-khons* pay their respects, too, and their contribution is their performance.

The mourning practice of *qasīda-khonī* has its particularities and customs that must be maintained to fulfill the needs of the community. The performers are required to evoke an atmosphere that supports not only the family of the deceased but also revives the community present at the house. During the long duration of their performance, the performers support different groups of people at the same time: people who are in sorrow, people who are there for emotional support, people seeking diversion, and indeed the soul of the deceased. With their performance, the *qasīda-khon*s pay their last respects to the spirit of the deceased. It is a useful spiritual tool for comforting the mourning family members and easing their pain. It assists in channeling emotions of grief and sorrow and keep them from becoming physically overwhelming. Mournings in the GBAO can otherwise become overwhelming for participants, and many people harm themselves physically, scratching their faces, pulling their hair or banging their heads against walls. Uncontrollable physical weeping and mourning can become a form of self-inflicted violence. The performance allows for a peaceful release of grief and its related emotions.

An additional purpose of such performances is to underscore relations to a communal past as a means of propagating and educating the community about its underlying faith and religion. The death of a community member provides an opportunity for collective gathering. The mourning ceremony offers not only a place of mourning but also a place of learning, a place that provides a chance for ordinary people to revisit the roots of their faith. For some people, it simplifies the understanding of faith. As one participant put it:

> *I cannot understand the books, which I read about religion; they are very difficult to understand. But I can understand when I attend a* qasīda-khonī *performance at funerals. Here they explain what they sing.*[227]

This view brings us to Schechner's idea that performance has the capacity to make abstract things specific, to make a broad idea small, or to make cognitive difficulties easier. For example, one cannot see the whole world on a globe at the same time, but maps can illustrate the whole world on a flat surface.[228] In our case, through *qasīda-khonī*, the participants imbibe their faith and religion in an artistic way that makes it simpler for them to understand and practice it.

It also provides an opportunity for the faithful to spend some moments in touch with their spirituality and to have a virtual *didor* [vision] or, as the Pamirī Ismailis call it, *didor-i botinī* [a spiritual vision]. One of the *khalīfa*s indicated to me that, "It was through the *qasīda-khonī* that we kept our faith in him alive, despite not being in contact with our Imam for seventy years."[229] Thus, bearing witness to a *qasīda-khonī* performance during a mourning ceremony offers a means by which to achieve virtual *didor*. Through the act of listening to the sung texts, participants seek to approach God and their living spiritual leader, thereby gaining an understanding of spiritual truths (*haqiqat*). As Azizkhon Karimov pointed out to me in an interview, "During *qasīda-khonī* one receives a spiritual blessing (*baraka*). This is a sign of a constant connection with the Imam."[230] The poetic texts and the music carry a potent religious message and ignite emotions that urge listeners to transcend the physical world and bring them closer to the realm of numinous truths. They intensify the participants' longing for *didor*. As they listen to sung *qasoid*s, participants weep, and sway their heads, achieving a state similar to ecstasy, which is what makes *qasīda-khonī* so powerful and significant. During mourning ceremonies, *qasīda-khonī* represents an interaction of

[227] Shogun Gharibmamadov, interview, December 2011, Shirgin village, Wakhan.
[228] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies, An Introduction, Second Edition* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 45.
[229] Mamadbek, interview, December 2011, Yamg, Wakhan.
[230] Azizkhon, interview, November 2011 in Tughgoz.

music and ritual in a setting in which people from all social classes in the community are either directly or indirectly involved and are touched.

The Performance of *Qasīda-khonī* in the Pamirī House

The significance of *qasīda-khonī* is not only determined by the context in which it is performed, but also by the physical location of that context. In Pamirī Ismaili culture, the most common place where *qasīda-khonī* is observed is the Pamirī house.

As noted in Chapter 1, the traditional Pamirī house has a unique architecture imbued with sacred and religious meanings. The five pillars that were described earlier represent the sacred figures of the Prophet Muḥammad, ʻAli, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, jointly forming the concept of the *panj tan-i pok* [the Five Pure Bodies], an idea that served as a marker of religious identity for the Pamirī Ismaili until 1995, when the connection to the global Ismaili community was at last established.

The sacred meanings bestowed upon the physical structure of the Pamirī house have a bearing on the spatial placement of the participants in various ceremonies and rituals conducted in it. For example, during performances of *qasīda-khonī* sung in praise *panj tan-i pok* and the Imams, in Wakhan, the performers sit in front of the pillar that represents Mehr and Imom Alī. In Shughnan, they sit in front of the pillar that represents Oraz and Ḥusayn, in an area otherwise reserved for honored male members of the household and guests. During funeral ceremonies, women sit and perform the lament songs by the pillar associated with Anahita and Fāṭima, in what is regarded as the female area of the room.

When talking about theatre, Beeman emphasizes the importance of place, arguing that the theatre is an institution where cultural meaning is created, where the living and non-living come into contact with each other through performances, and where a social network and cognitive

relationship between performers and audiences are set up.[231] We can take Beeman's argument and extrapolate it to argue, in this discussion, that place acts as a communicator. The performance, as a cultural event, materializing in a particular area and a specific context refreshes social networks and cognitive relationships between not only the performers and the audience present, but it establishes a connection with the non-living as well.

Zaimkhon, for instance, differentiates the performance of *qasīda-khonī* within the home from its performance at concert halls by characterizing *qasīda-khonī* as a form of *zikr* (remembrance) in musical style, which binds the *qasīda-khon* to the world of spirituality. As a ceremony, *zikr* has unique features that vary between cultures. For our discussion, it is essential only to note that "in spirit rather than form,"[232] *qasīda-khonī* at mourning ceremonies can be considered as a distinct type of *zikr* ceremony. Zaimkhon says:

> Qasīda-khonī *is* zikr-i Khudovand *[remembrance of God]. The location of* zikr *is not on stage, and it is in your heart. It should be in private. You know it is a conversation between you and God, the Prophet and the Imam. I cannot go on stage and do the* zikr *and expect people to clap for me. I think it is wrong when people perform it on stage. On stage, the* qasīda-khon *is worried about his performance, whether it will be good or bad, whether people will like it or not, but here [in the house] there is no good or bad* qasīda-khonī*. We reflect and meditate. We think about God, the Prophet, our Imam Alī, our Imam Shoh Karim, our deeds.*[233]

Olim is a *qasīda-khon* who came to Khorog from Rushan to participate in a seminar organized for *qasīda-khons* from different parts of Badakhshan by the School of Devotional Literature. In an interview he stated:

> *One only gets the essence of* qasīda-khonī *in the house. This event [at the school] cannot be considered a religious one, even though the main focus was on spiritual practice. For me, it was attending a class where I was able to learn about what the*

[231] William O. Beeman, "The Anthropology and Theatre and Spectacle," *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1993): 370.
[232] Benjamin Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 48.
[233] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, October 2011, Shitkharv.

> *musicians in Shohdara sing and how they play. To experience a real* qasīda-khonī *one should attend the* dawat*. In* dawat *you will get the essence of the* qasīda-khonī.[234]

The Pamirī house with its religious-symbolic architecture, therefore, plays a significant role in the production of the cultural meaning of *qasīda-khonī*. In this context, it is worth noting Bourdieu's emphasis on living spaces and physical features of private interiors as these bring about patterns of thinking and feeling and their aesthetic, moral, and cultural values are implicit within material structures conveyed by design.[235] The architectural design of the Pamirī house, its religious-symbolic meaning, and the performance of *qasīda-khonī* intersect in ways that determine the significance of *qasīda-khonī*. Through the musical performance the house is transformed from a mundane dwelling to a space of religious experience, a sacred space, where people imagine themselves to be in the presence of God and their Imam

How do the *qasīda-khon*s differentiate between the *qasīda-khonī* performance in the Pamirī house and its performance outside? A performance that was organized by the School of Devotional Literature at the *Kokh-i Javonon* [Youth Palace] of Khorog, a government-owned venue for non-religious gatherings, was considered by many *qasīda-khon*s (who were the majority of the participants) as a "cultural demonstration" (*namoish-i farhangī*) and not a religious performance. The musicians explained that there all they did was to show and share their skills and experiences. Their intentions were focused not on the deeper meaning of their performance but on skills, such as singing and playing the instruments. Olim recalled:

> *Here [in the Youth Palace] I felt pressure, and I was nervous because I was thinking about the people, the organizers, my performance. When I perform in* dawat *I never*

[234] Olim, interview, November 2011, Khorog.
[235] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), esp. Chapter 3, "The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles," 169-225.

think about my appearance. I focus on my emotions (ehsos-i darunī). I think about God about my Imam. [236]

Since most religious rituals are solely performed inside the Pamirī house, the house transforms into a space where the essence of the sacredness of *qasīda-khonī* can be truly understood, which differentiates it from the performance of other musical genres. It is a place where the performers secure a special place and a distinguished status from the audience. The mourning ceremony is conducted in the house, where the community unites in mutual support of the family in their time of grief. Song thus becomes an intermediary via which to celebrate and solidify close communal ties and the feelings of obligation between neighbors and community members.

However, there are moments when the religious and cultural aspects of the performance are fused. At alumni meeting Tajikistan and other graduates from the London's Institute of Ismaili Studies gathered in Dushanbe in 2011 to participate in an event where *qasīda-khonī* was performed.[237] The performance commenced with a short introduction to the diversity of religious and cultural practices within the Ismaili community around the globe. The actual event consisted of two parts: the first was a stage-play about Nāṣir-i Khusraw's mission in Badakhshan and the second was followed through with a *qasīda-khonī* performance by the "Pamir Ensemble," a state-sponsored musical group. This event aimed to introduce Ismaili graduates from different parts of the world to some of the religious practices of the Ismailis of Tajikistan. The event was considered simultaneously religious and cultural. For Aqnazar, as a performer, it was a cultural performance enhanced with religious meaning. He found it a semi-religious performance, as it was organized as a cultural event in a non-ritual context, however much it featured religious texts and music. Aqnazar

[236] Olim, interview, 27-28 November 2011, Khorog.
[237] See the image of the performance in Appendix E.

said, "I have come here to introduce to non-Pamirīs our culture, our tradition."[238] Sohiba, the dancer of the musical group, expressed similar views:

> *This event was a cultural show. It was meant to show to non-Pamirī Ismailis our tradition, our culture. We are Ismailis, but we have distinct practices. It was an introduction of our culture and practices to other Ismailis.*[239]

Aqnazar and Sohiba described it as a "show" since it was meant among other things for recreational purposes. The performers agree that a deeper spiritual meaning cannot unfold in such a context. The performance was an organized program of activity, a set consisting of performers, an audience, a venue, and a pre-specified occasion for the performance, where elements of culture were presented to non-Pamirī Ismaili Muslims to demonstrate the fundamental ideas and principles upon which the Pamirī Ismaili religious and cultural world operates. A spiritual experience, however, it was not.

Performance of *Qasīda-khonī* in the *Jamoat-khona*

As noted previously, many aspects of life changed in Tajikistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Religious institutions emerged, and spiritual practices were restarted or were performed openly once again. The establishing of a connection with the global Ismaili community resulted in many changes formed on the idea of implementing the institutionalization of a unitary Ismaili religious creed and practice around the globe. Jonah Steinberg writes that in the post-Soviet period, the Ismailis of the GBAO have become part of the larger "transnational Ismaili assemblage" and "the encounter between the global Ismaili religious institutions that push for standardization of the Ismaili religious practices and the local religious practices in Badakhshan has become a source of contestations and tensions in the region."[240]

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[238] Aqnazar, interview, September 2011, Dushanbe.
[239] Sohiba Dawlatshoeva, interview, September 2011, Dushanbe.
[240] Jonah Steinberg, *Isma'ili Modern: Globalization and Identity in a Muslim Community* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 14.

The institutionalization of a unitary and centralized religious practice encountered problems in the Pamir region because, as noted in Chapter 1, before 1995 the Pamirī Ismailis did not have any contact with the global Ismaili community or Ismaili religious institutions abroad. To bring the internally diverse spiritual practices and customs of the GBAO, none of which did accord with the practice of the global Ismaili community, under one global institutional norm created disagreement, tension, and confusion. In this context, *qasīda-khonī* and other local religious practices became bone of contention in particular as the global processes were by the GBAO performers and their audience perceived as a threat to the authenticity of their local communal identity.

The push for institutionalization affected *qasīda-khonī* in a number of ways. The *qasīda-khonī* performance was introduced into the new congregational space of the Pamirī Ismailis, the *jamoat-khona*. *Jamoat-khona*s is a place for the Ismaili community to perform their religious ceremonies and has been used by other Ismailis around the world for some time now. In the GBAO, before the first visit of the Aga Khan IV to the Pamirs in 1995, there were no *jamoat-khona*s or communal prayer halls. The Pamirī house served as the site for individual and collective prayers. In many places today, it continues to serve the same function as there are not *jamoat-khonas* in all areas of the GBAO.

As noted in the previous chapter, at the Ismaili Centre in Dushanbe, a teaching and learning center started working on training the young generation in the art form. Female singers are involved in the performance as well, and they are now performing part of the everyday prayer in the *jamoat-khona* daily. Although *qasīda-khonī* has retained its religious significance under the new auspices, as a genre performed inside the *jamoat-khona* it has acquired a different form and structure, and the performance mode has changed. As part of their new congregational ceremony, before commencing the prayer, the Pamirī Ismailis sing *qasīdas* without instrumental accompaniment. The song texts are concise as compared to some of the traditionally lengthier texts of *qasīda-khonī.*

In this sense, Mamadali, who is teaching and training at the Center (see also introduction in Chapter 3), commented that the *qasīda-khonī* texts in the *jamoat-khona* are shorter because the performance in the congregation hall, as part of the daily religious practice is restricted in time. The texts are by people closely studied and carefully selected. The criteria set for the selection of the song texts naturally relate to the contents but also the expected duration of the performance. Texts that are long and have content which could be understood as polemical are not accepted:

> *Before giving them [the young performers] permission to sing, I check their poetry in terms of content and rhyming. Sometimes they bring a text that is not appropriate for the ceremony. Some of the texts might have phrases that could upset our non-Ismaili brothers and sisters. I go through the text very carefully. If there is a problem with the text, then I choose a text for the performers myself. Mostly, the texts I choose are short ghazals, either written by contemporary or classical poets. I choose these poems because they are short and compatible with content and the time allocated for the performance.*[241]

As soon as Mamadali or Sohiba permit that students may sing publicly, the students register their names on the waiting lists with the religious leader at the *jamoat-khona*. When their turn approaches, they are informed one day prior to their appearance. The youth can not sing texts that have not been approved by Mamadali or Sohiba during the *jamoat-khona* ceremonies. Despite differences in the practice as compared to the performance at mourning ceremonies, Mamadali emphasized that it is generally very satisfying to see young people are interested in being involved in the practice. Azizkhon, however, complained that the "true practice" is disappearing under the influence of the new practices, which he referred to the new institutional norms and regulations.

An essential point of difference in performance at the *jamoat-khona* is that female singers are also involved there at the *jamoat-khona* , whereas at mourning and other customary religious occasions only men were and are allowed to perform. First, *qasīda-khonī* is performed by a male *qasīda-khon* of the community before the first part of the prayer, which is also conducted by a male member of

[241] Mamadali, interview, August 2011, Dushanbe.

the community. A female member of the community then performs before the second part of the prayer.

Musical instruments are not allowed inside the prayer hall, and during the performance, the *qasīda-khon* performs solo, or sometimes the audience members who know the poems join in with the lead singer. *Qasīda-khonī* is only performed with musical instruments outside of the congregational hall, for example during cultural events in the community hall, or small circles of the *qasīda-khon*s in classrooms of the Ismaili Centre. The performances are organized and performed depends in line with the regulations of the *jamoat-khona* as part of the globalized religious institution of the Ismailis; every Ismaili *jamoat-khona* around the globe has the same procedures, and the organization of practice is expected to follow the prescribed regulations.

Debate on the Authenticity of Qasīda-khonī *in the* Jamoat-khona*s*

The effect of institutionalization has led to a discussion between the older and younger generations of performers and audience members on the authenticity of the performance. Older performers are confounded by the idea of doing *qasīda-khonī* without the *rubob.* In their view, the new-style performances in the *jamoat-khona* are not "authentic." The authenticity of the performance is for the elders associated with musical instruments, the particular venue, and its ceremonial purpose. According to the *qasīda-khon*s, *qasīda-khonī* as a religious practice should be performed with the *rubob*, which is traditionally recognized as a sacred instrument. Its sacredness is associated with, and shaped by stories and narratives of the people, as I will discuss in Chapter 5.

Kholmamad, a *qasīda-khon*, expressed his disagreement with the way *qasīda-khonī* happens today in the *jamoat-khona*, stating that he cannot imagine himself performing without the *rubob*. He believes that *qasīda-khonī* "was born with the *rubob*."

The first qasīda *was sung with the* rubob. *When Nāṣir-i Khusraw came to Badakhshan, he asked the King of Badakhshan to make a* rubob *from the saddle of the king's horse, and then he asked the king to sing. The king started singing this qasida with the rubob:*

Yak zabonam, sano, Ali gūyad,
Dū labam virḍ-i yo Ali gūyad.
Īn saram sajda karda ba mahbūb,
Si-vu dū dandon-i man Ali gūyad.

My tongue says the praise of Ali,
My two lips continuously say, "O Ali."
This head of mine bows to the beloved and,
My thirty-two teeth say, Ali.[242]

Examples such as this one allow the older generation of performers to express and demonstrate their distinctiveness grounded in local custom through resistance against change.[243] Their resistance demonstrates how closely they are connected to the norms and values of their own musical culture, which contributes to maintain their local and personal identities. However, the authority of the institutions, which is related to the Imam of the Time, is stronger than the authority of individual performers and audience members, and so they are obliged to yield to the institutional norms. This acceptance, in return, allows them to be integrated into the global Ismaili network, "to move within a centralized, non-national, non-territorial polity from which they derive the central emblem of their identity."[244]

Institutional Restrictions

Certain institutional restrictions are placed upon the duration of the *qasīda-khonī* performance. It is officially announced to communities by the *khalīfa*s that *qasīda-khonī* for mourning ceremonies should not be performed for the whole night but only until midnight. These are restrictions imposed

[242] Kholmamad, interview, November 2011, Khorog. The story is also found in *Baḥr-ul-akhbār* [Ocean of News], edited by R. Rahmonqulov (Khorog: Pamir Press, 1991): 33.
[243] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds. *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).
[244] Jonah Steinberg, *Isma'ili Modern: Globalization and Identity in a Muslim Community* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 1.

by the Tajik state law on control of customs and rites. However, in many places in the Pamirs, people do not obey these regulations. They follow their habitual ways of practicing their religion. Many of the *qasīda-khon*s consider their service as *sawob* [merituous deed]. What they accumulate by serving would entitle them to the spiritual reward, and therefore they feel obliged to perform the whole night through at the house of the deceased. My conversation partners emphasized that it is their duty to serve their community members who are in mourning. For instance, the *qasīda-khon* Olim told me:

> *It is my duty and responsibility to be there at this moment. What else can I do for them? I am part of them. Their sorrow is my sorrow. This moment could happen to anyone. I come and sing in order to console them. It is good for them and me. They feel better, and I feel better at the same time and get my* sawob. *I do not care what other people say. I am helping my neighbor.*[245]

For Olim as a performer and member of the local community, the norms and values of the community surpass those of the institution. Accordingly, sharing the experience with his fellow community members is more important than abiding by official regulations. It is partly his perception and partly a point that is deeply embedded in the social and spiritual function of *qasīda-khonī* bears in the community. Although standardization or institutionalization enforces changes, it is the individuals and groups of individuals who make the decision regarding which customs to retain, alter, or discard. As Blacking says, "changes are the results of decisions made by individuals about music-making and music."[246]

The *qasīda-khons* are puzzled to experience the changes imposed on them by state and confessional institutions, which hold divergent views on the performance of *qasīda-khonī*. Many of the *qasīda-khon*s indicated to me that as part of the global Ismailī community, they must respect and accept

[245] Olim, interviewed November 2011, Khorog.
[246] John Blacking, "Identifying Processes of Musical Change." *The World of Music*, 28, No. 1 (1986): 3; http://www.jstor.org/stable/43561081 (last accessed May 5, 2013).

the rules of the confessional institution. For instance, playing musical instruments in the congregational places is prohibited, and today qasīda-khonī is performed without musical instruments at *jamoat-khona*s. Now, this disagreement embodies the collision of the long-established local religious norms with new institutionalized religious rules and policies. The contrasting and contested views on the performance require people to separate various types of *qasīda-khonī* and performers into different categories. Hence, today, it is not possible to talk about one single genre of performance, but we face multiple genres that have contributed to the emergence of various interconnected identities. The performance of *qasīda-khonī* varies in terms of the means of performance, repertoire of texts sung, and performance duration, due to the intersection of restrictions imposed by religious institutions as well as state regulation of ritual practices.[247]

Connection to the global Ismaili network and the revival of religious practices after the Soviet Union have contributed to the practice of *qasīda-khonī* with a new form, along with new modes of learning and performing. People noted that the standardization of religious practices by the global Ismaili authorities and the Tajik state law had affected *qasīda-khonī* in both negative and positive ways. A positive outcome is that it has created a space, which is accessible to all and, it is no longer an exclusively male domain. Women, specifically those from the younger generation, are welcome to sing. The negative aspect of this standardization is that the musical instrument, which has an indigenous form and long history, perhaps loses its function and meaning not played in the context of the *jamoat-khona* performances. The short duration of the performance results in a number of the song texts being compromised and forgotten.

[247] There is a state law in Tajikistan on the observance of ritual "*Tanzimi rasmu rusūm*" that controls lavish expenditure on weddings, mourning and funeral ceremonies, and other gatherings. See *Qonūn-i Jumhūrī-yi Tojikiston dar borayi Tanzim-i an'ana va jashn-u marosimho* [The law of Tajikistan Republic on regulations of , customs, rites and celebrations], 8 June 2007; last accessed on 30 August 2016 at: http://www.vfarhang.tj/kcfinder/upload/files/dar_borai_tanzimi_anana_va_chashnu_marosim.pdf.

Qasīda-khonī on Stage

This section is concerned with how the new stage performance of *qasīda-khonī* has contributed to the splitting off of different identities: local, religious, local, national, and global.

When we examine the evolution and frictions in the history of *qasīda-khonī*, it becomes clear that constant change through inventive integration of various influences has all the times brought new meanings to its performative and social contexts. *Qasīda-khonī* has become intertwined with related art and with political concerns, and its meaning and value are influenced by social and institutional norms that construct different identities for the performers which are today partly in conflict with each other but are also to a certain extent integrated. When the performers sing and play at mourning ceremonies or at religious occasions they are categorized as *qasīda-khon, qasoid-khon*, *maddo-khon,* or *madi(h)ya-khon*, but when they perform the same music and texts on stage, they are considered musicians or singers (*bayd-guy, sozenda, sozlovij,* or *hofiz*) and the performance becomes *baid-guyī, sozengī,* or *soz* [singing songs]. The *qasīda-khons* regard their performance during the mourning ceremony as a service (*khizmat*) and responsibility, which they render voluntarily, whereas on stage playing and singing is considered to be a profession and the artists need to be compensated even if they sing the same songs.

The audiences are also categorized differently depending on the venue in question. During mourning ceremonies, people participate and feel themselves to be an active participant of an event while sitting in the auditorium; they are mostly passive audience members only.

Unlike the *qasīda-khonī* at mourning ceremonies and in the *jamoat-khona*, *qasīda-khonī* on stage demands for the performers to be dressed in a special costume. They play musical instruments different for those used there, including metal-string lutes; and they dance to the music as well. The duration of the performance is shorter than for the mourning ceremonies, and the atmosphere

is largely light and entertaining. The performance is received as entertainment, and the performers and participants are recognized as singers, entertainers, and audiences.

I now proceed to look at how the stage performance of *qasīda-khonī* contributes to the production of particular identities in Tajikistan today.

Religious Festivals

Stage performances of *qasīda-khonī* today take place during the three main new religious festivals of the Pamirī Ismailis, as noted in Chapter 2. These celebrations are usually conducted outdoors if the weather permits. They are open to everyone, including children. They are days of festivity and cheer. The celebrations include secular activities such as sport games, cooking and consuming special food, art exhibitions, fashion displays for purchasers of new clothes, and musical and dance performances. They also include religious activities such as *qasīda-khonī* as well as processions. Such festivals constitute a way through which the authority of the Imam is celebrated and strengthened, and help to establish the basis for the success of the centralizing movement described earlier.

A Case Study: Rūz-i Takhtnishīnī [The Day of Imamate] in Langar Village

During my fieldwork in the GBAO, I attended a celebration of the *Rūz-i Takhtnishīnī* (The Day of Imamate) in Langar village, the remotest village in the eastern part of the Wakhan in Tajikistan.[248] The day is considered very special in that it is the day of the Imam's ascendence to the throne of Imamate. The performance in which I participated took place outdoors, in a wide and spacious yard in front of the museum-house of Shoh Qambar-i Oftob, one of the dervishes who contributed to the Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *da'wat* in the region.[249] As *khalīfa* Yodgor explained to me, "Shoh

[248] See a picture from the performance in Appendix F.
[249] See also Chapter 1. The dervish resided in the Wakhan, in Langar village. A. Iloliev, "Popular culture and religious metaphor: saints and shrines in Wakhan region of Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.17, No. 1 (March 2008): 62.

Qambar-i Oftob was a saint, who came from Khorasan to the Wakhan through China. When Shoh Qambar-i Oftob reached the first village of the Wakhan, Langar, he decided to stay there."[250] The house of Shoh Qambar-i Oftob is now a shrine, a place of worship for people of the Wakhan.[251]

Khalīfa Yodgor explained the purpose of celebrating the *Rūz-i Takhtnishīnī* in this particular place: "This is a sacred place for the Pamirī Ismailis because the *qadam-i muborak* [holy footprint] of Shoh Qambar-i Oftob and the Imom-i Zamon [the Present Imam] have reached this place."[252] When the Aga Khan visited the Wakhan in September 1998 and granted *dīdor* to his followers in Langar village. The celebration had taken place on the large grounds opposite the museum-house. On the day of the celebration I observed, a little further down at an elevation in front of the museum, a stage was set up, decorated with flowers, colorful balloons, and a picture of the Aga Khan.

Additionally, it was decorated with the national flag of Tajikistan, with quotations from speeches of the Aga Khan and verses from the Qur'an printed on the front walls of the stage. The stage was located at the same place where the Aga Khan had delivered his speech in 1998. *Khalīfa* Yodgor explained the importance of the stage:

> *The stage symbolizes the throne of the Imom-i Zamon [the Present Imam]. Even if he is not physically on this stage, spiritually he shares with us this happy moment. The Imam is happy now that we are celebrating this holiday. It is he who makes us happy, saves our life from sorrow, and protects us from famine. He congratulated us on this occasion, and I have read out his farmon [decree] to the people today.*[253]

As *khalīfa* Yodgor explains, this stage is different from ordinary stages of concerts or those put up for celebrating national holidays. People provide special importance to the "stage" in relation to their belief system and remember and re-experience the past moment where they were granted

[250] Khalifa Yodgor, interview, July 2011, Langar village, Wakhan.
[251] On the right side of the shrine there is a Pamirī house that represents the house of Shoh Qambar-i Oftob, which functions as an ethnographic museum.
[252] Khalifa Yodgor, interview, July 2011, Langar village, Wakhan.
[253] Ibid.

dīdor in front of their living Imam on his "throne." Through experiencing the actual celebration, they are (re-)connecting with their past experiences.

The ethnographic materials relating to the event demonstrate the entwinement of the centralized or institutionalized practices that were highlighted earlier, on the one hand, and the conventional sources of power of the Imam and his veneration by the local people, on the other. A committee consisting of a man and a woman directed the performance. It started with the burning of incense by an elderly female member of the community to purify the place from the evil eye and breath. After that the participants were asked to repeat the *durūd*, a blessed salutation – *Allohumā ṣallā ʻalā Muḥammadin wa āhl-i Muḥammad* [Oh God give your blessings to Muḥammad and his progeny] for eleven times, each time first read out loud by the woman. After that, *khalīfa* Yodgor, who was responsible for the event, recited a verse from the Qur'an and a girl recited the meaning of the verse in the Tajik language. Soon after that, a man delivered a speech about the significance of the day in the history of the Ismailis, followed by the recitation of another verse from the Qur'an by the *khalīfa*. Then the concert commenced, where the singers, a mixed group of men, women, and schoolchildren, dedicated songs to the Aga Khan and the Day of the Imamate.

The concert was followed by the prayer (*duo*) of the *khalifa,* and then the performance of *qasīda-khonī* commenced. Five or six *qasīda-khon*s sat together in a circle. Each *qasīda-khon* was wearing a white shirt with embroidery on the neckline and at the edge of the sleeves, and they had covered their heads with the Wakhi cap (*skid*). It was not only the *qasīda-khon*s who were dressed in these outfits, but all the performers, including singers, dancers, speakers, and musicians were so, too.

The song texts that were performed had been newly written by local poets and were themed around the *Rūz-i Takhtnishīnī*. The performers sang only five short *ghazal*s. They did not perform traditional, longer *qasīda-khonī* texts, considering the mood and occasion of the holiday. *Khalīfa* Yodgor explained that "on such occasions, it is not possible to perform *qasīda-khonī* for long

periods. It would be tiresome (*khastakunanda*) for the children and young people. This is a moment of joy and happiness."[254] After the *qasīda-khonī* performance ended, the schoolchildren began to perform their concert program. There were sports matches of volleyball, table tennis, and wrestling. Free food (*khudoyī*) was distributed to the attendees, followed by a concert at which people collectively danced. The *qasīda-khonī* performance continued in the museum-house of Shoh Qambar-i Oftob in the evenings, when only adults and the admirers of *qasīda-khonī* attended. The performance began soon after the participants offered their prayers. In the outdoor performance of *qasīda-khonī*, the participants had come from different social groups, regardless of age and gender. In the indoor performance, on the other hand, only adults attended. *Khalīfa* Yodgor clarified:

> *Young people and children do not understand the meaning of qasīda-khonī. If they come, they will not listen, and they distract people's attention. Therefore we do not allow them to participate in the performance. Also, in the house we discuss the meaning of each qasoid in detail, and this needs careful attention.*[255]

During the performance in the museum-house, there were intervals and interruptions between the performances, which allowed the *khalīfa* to explain the meaning of the texts were sung. Nothing of that kind happened during the performance outdoors during the day. The Pamirīs call this evening or night the *shab-i maḥfil* [the night of the gathering party] or *shab-i ma'rifat* [the night of gnosis], in part because of the interpretation element that is included in the performance.

At this particular ceremony, some of the esoteric meanings of the texts were related to understand Islam and Ismailism. One of the themes of the *shab-i maḥfil* was, "Who is the Imam?" Another was "What is the significance and meaning of the *Rūz-i Takhtnishīnī*?" The *qasīda-khon*s performed song texts that were related to those topics, and the *khalīfa* explained their meanings. Another instance of this interpretative performance involved the explication of an important theme

[254] Khalifa Yodgor, interview, July 2011, Langar village, Wakhan.
[255] Ibid.

that the Aga Khan invites his followers to understand is the notion of humanity and plurality in the world and in the respective country where they reside. People should strive to understand pluralism and diversity in the world. This theme was projected in the song texts during the *qasīda-khonī* performance and discussed in the *shab-i ma'rifat*. *Khalīfa* Yodgor interpreted the following verse from the *qasīda-khonī* performance:

> *Harf-i bad-ro bar lab guftan gunoh-st*
> *Kofir-ū mu'min ham khalq-i Khudo-st*
>
> *[To utter bad words is a sin*
> *Unbelievers and believers [are] all creatures of God.]*[256]

He encouraged people, as part of the interpretation, saying, "Our Imam advises that we do not set divisions between religions or peoples. We are all creatures of God. The Imam wants us to respect all people regardless of their religious affiliations. To God, everybody is the same."[257] The performance concluded with the *khalīfa* congratulating the people on the occasion of the day and reciting a *duo* [prayer] for the happiness, peace, and success of the community. Finally he honored and rewarded the work of the *qasīda-khon*s by reciting another special *duo* for them.

The *qasīda-khonī* performance apart from its interpretative function helped evoke collective memory which is shaped and transmitted through this communal festival of music, dance, congratulating each other, eating food together, and talking about the experiences of the first day of the *dīdor.* Each act of communal celebration, as Pierre Nora suggests, reproduces narratives that commemorate a particular past, accounts for this ritualized remembrance and provides a moral message for the group.[258] These messages provide the community with a notion of a shared past and at the same time, serve the interests and the agenda of the day. The song texts that were devoted

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[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Pierre, Nora. "From Lieux de Memoire to Realm of Memory," in *Realms of Memory*, Vol. 1: *Conflicts and Division*, eds. Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xxvii.

to the *Rūz-i Takhtnishīnī* and the music people had heard at the time of the *dīdor* took people closer to the distant past, reproduced the experience within them, [259] and fostered communal solidarity.

Gulnor, a woman in her forties, was sitting next to me with her children when the *qasīda-khon*s began to sing a *ghazal* composed by a local poet for the occasion of the first day of seeing their Imam. The *ghazal* was called "*Khush Omadī*" [Welcome!]. While listening to the *ghazal*, Gulnor was deeply moved and began to weep. She told me that she remembered the first day, sitting there and waiting for the moment to catch sight of the Imam:

> *By hearing this particular* qasoid*, I was there back to that moment. The moment when he walked in, and I saw my Imam for the first time in my life. Our forefathers and mothers were longing to see him, but they couldn't. We were fortunate that he came to see us. That moment is still with me and will be so until I die.*[260]

Every year this celebration commemorates their devotion to the Imam, with people doing good deeds for their community. They offer free food to everyone and help the needy in the city; in Khorog, public transportation provides free rides for people during the day, and people congratulate each other for being granted the vision of their Imam. The act of remembering constitutes and produces a sense of collective identity, providing narratives and performative occasions marking the events and times that are understood to define the community.[261] Through interactions during the events, the people's joy comes to the fore, evoked by music, songs, and the general ambiance, which intensifies those emotions. This demonstrates the complexity of cultural interaction and belonging in contexts where performances serve to build the very notion of a cultural identity.

Furthermore, *qasīda-khonī* is a living practice, living in both contemporary and traditional ways to satisfy a broad range of potential audiences, including even becoming a commercial enterprise. It

[259] It is a custom that during the *dīdor* in front of the Imam *qasīda-khonī* must be performed but without musical instruments.
[260] Gulnor Nazaralibekova, interview, July 2011, Langar village.
[261] John R. Gillis, "Introduction: Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3-24.

has been televised and recorded and has merged into public and private domestic relationships in the context of the family. Those unable to participate in the outdoor festivals follow the events through televised performances or personal video recordings, or video recordings broadcast on social networks such as Facebook and YouTube, which can be accessed by Ismailis worldwide.

Qasīda-khonī and the Building of a National Identity Inside

Although national identities and sentiments are territorially determined and politically constructed, they are also creatively and culturally reproduced and staged. As Benedict Anderson suggests, people have a sense of their nation and of national identity based on their participation in shared cultural practices such as, for instance, reading newspapers, listening to the radio, watching television, and reading novels,[262] and we may add food, clothing, dance, discussions, celebration of holidays, participation in festivals, and listening to and making music. Through their cultural activities, people imagine their communities. One of the ways they will do so is through cultural performances like *qasīda-khonī.*

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of civil war in Tajikistan, the interior formation of the Tajikistan nation-state and the creation of a feeling of nationalism and national sentiment took place. In all of this, music played a significant role. The waves of independence that swept across Central Asia beginning in the 1990s resulted in many cultural and religious practices being fostered to serve as a tool for nation-building. The states targeted traditional musical genres for appropriation and absorption into their "national culture" with modifications to accommodate the new nationalist goals and objectives. They began to produce, among other events, spectacular concerts on the occasion of the most important national holidays to express national identity.[263]

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[262] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2nd edition, 1991). pp. 9-36.
[263] Laura L. Adams, *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010).

Kyrgyzstan's first president, Askar Akaev, used some of the central ideas of *Manas* (the monumental Kyrgyz epic) as a basis for building a new national ideology for the newly independent country.[264] In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, *shashmaqom,* a classical music genre, has been promoted as an item of national cultural heritage and many national celebrations and concerts are embellished with performances of the genre. President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon signed a decree "On the Further Development of the Art of *Shashmaqom* in the Republic of Tajikistan" in 2000 and declared May 12 a "Day of *Shahmaqom.*"[265] Since then, the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan began to organize and sponsor annual musical competitions in Dushanbe focused on the local musical culture. A number of the competitions have attained national status, intending to discover, support, and motivating new talents, as well as preserving what is defined as the national musical heritage. The state has utilized these musical genres to consolidate its power. As Burton Benedict writes:

> *TThe states have sought appropriate symbols to project an image of unity for their people and to present to the world at large. Like many older nations, they have invented traditions and reconstituted history. They have delved into the events of their pasts to find appropriate symbols and to construct narratives which will justify their national identities.*[266]

In Tajikistan, the state authority made the same efforts as described by Burton Benedict, to create and define a national identity, using literature, the media, and popular culture. The state established a set of stories, images, landscapes, historical events, national symbols and rituals, and a currency to construct and justify its national identity.

Additionally, it replaced a statue of Lenin in a central place with a stature of Ismoili Somoni and began to promote musical and cultural heritage as national symbols. These symbols were designed

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[264] Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzskaia gosudarstvennost' i narodnyi epos "Manas"* [Kyrgyz Statehood and the Folk Epic *Manas*] (Bishkek: Uchkun, 2002).
[265]See "Shashmaqom." 12th of May 2001: last accessed on November, 2015, available at: http://vfarhang.tj/index.php/tj/component/content/article/14-merosi-e-joshuda/674-shashma-om.
[266] Burton Benedict, "International Exhibitions and National Identity," *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 7 (1991): 5. See also Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 167.

to "stand for or represent the shared experiences, sorrows and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation."[267]

Folk musical genres have been revisited, revived, and transformed into national treasures in the post-Soviet period. Singers and instrumentalists in the Pamirs began to adapt folk songs to modern performance styles and perform at state celebrations. For instance, the "Pamir Ensemble," the "Samo Ensemble," and individual musicians and singers such as Nobowar Chinorov, Shuhrat Saynakov, and many others are creatively composing and bringing Pamirī folk songs and music to the people by synthesizing them with forms of pop music known as *estrada*[268] for the national stage.

In musical terms, *qasīda-khonī* as a folk music genre started to become popular in this period and spread within the country and beyond. Today it can be seen reflected in several other popular musical genres (*musiqī-yi khalqī*). It is now a staple of Tajik popular musical culture in the form of *Falak-i Badakhshonī*, although its purpose and functions in the Pamirī Ismaili community was entirely different. As *Falak-i Badakhshonī*, *qasīda-khonī* is far more structured and systematized and is restricted to a repertoire of national romanticism. These features shape the performance so that it becomes valuable for national ideological purposes. It is regarded, although not officially, as part of the national cultural heritage by state cultural organizations and institutions, and has entered a wider spectrum of performance and reception. But there is a vast, albeit artificial, difference between *Falak-i Badakhshonī* and *qasīda-khonī* as customary folk music. Aqnazar, as a *qasīda-khon,* has described his experience at national and international concerts:

[267] Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," *Modernity and Its Futures,* eds. Stuart Hall, David Held, and Tony McGrew (Oxford: Polity Press and Open University Press, 1992), 293.
[268] *Estrada* is a genre of electrified music introduced by Soviet Union musical institutions in Tajikistan. It is translated into English language as "pop music", by Federicco Spinetti. See Federico Spinetti, "Open Borders. Tradition and Tajik Popular Music: Questions of Aesthetics, Identity and Political Economy," *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 14:2, (2005): 185-211, DOI: 10.1080/17411910500329971 (last accessed May 5, 2015).

> *It struck me when I started to go abroad to perform that I was immediately identified as Tajik. I was going to several countries and suddenly found myself representing the Tajiks and Tajik music. I did not think about it. I was part of the organized concerts to play and sing with my group, and I ended up representing, in the minds of non-Tajik audiences, Tajik music.*[269]

The restructured *qasīda-khonī* on stage has built on the customary performance and was significantly updated, partly even reinvented, in an attempt to make it more readily available to a wider audience via concerts and through musical festivals regionally, nationally and internationally. In this process, it has also become a vehicle for the expression of a homogenized national identity.

These changes and transformations of *qasīda-khonī* are not only reinforced by the national ideology, but also by economic contexts where NGOs encourage the local craftsmen to produce their crafts, supporting them to revive their customs and stylize them as "traditional" and connect them to the global market. During my fieldwork, I visited the *DePamiri Handicraft*[270] office in Khorog, where I met Kholmamad, who brought a *rubob* to sell that he had made himself. Today, the *rubob* has been revitalized and reintroduced into mainstream performances. It is featured frequently at concerts, festivals, and folk music competitions, and is also produced for touristic consumption. State promotion and NGO support of folk culture, as an attribute of "traditional" Tajik culture and spirituality, contribute to its visibility in the public domain, for example at the musical competition of *Andaleb*, at *Falak* performances, at the Roof of the World Music Festival, etc. The state has invented or rather reinvented various "traditions" to claim the communities' heritage for an overarching national heritage.[271]

[269] Aqnazar, interview, October 2011, Dushanbe.
[270] DePamiri Handicraft is an organization that helps craftsmen to develop their craft and helps them sell their products.
[271] Similar process have been described by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Due to such cultural engineering aimed at establishing a unitary Tajik national identity, the Pamirī Ismaili identity is being absorbed into that unitary national identity. The religious music of the Pamirī Ismailis today being part of the musical performances on political events has come to symbolize the national identity. It appears that the "national focus" on hitherto particularly local musical traditions positively reinforces aspects of identity that overlap with the ones the Tajik government has selected.

State Festivals and Celebrations

Since the end of the civil war, the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan has curated an annual cultural program to various regions of the country. One of these programs is the national musical festival called *Andaleb* [Nightingale]. Its schedule usually includes seven to ten performances of folk music, singing, or dancing. The program is thematic, all related to one of the national festivals such as the Independence Day of Tajikistan (*Rūz-i Istiqloliyat*), the Day of Nation Unity (*Rūz-i Vahdat-i Millī*), the New Year (*Nawrūz*), and other national celebrations. These celebrations are essential from political and national point of view as Anthony Smith in his book *National Identity* indicates "they have become institutionalized by the ruling elites."[272] Through these celebrations, the state is engaged in the construction of a national identity, relying heavily on the use of local cultural forms of expression from all over the country. By trying to integrate particular cultural forms, the state is working to establish a collective national identity, an identity that blends aspects of all the various ethnic groups of the country under the designation of Tajik. This identity building is a necessary tool for the newly-established state to unite the people after a bloody civil war. This cultural strategy has become symbolic, representing nationalism and unity, and is characterized by the extensive use of cultural expressions such as music, costumes, food, and dance.

[272] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 73.

In Tajikistan, the most potent and durable aspect of this nation-building effort is the role of the days of commemoration and celebrations. National celebrations are prescribed and controlled by the state, and citizens are summoned to take part in the ceremonial activities. Through these events, every member of the community participates in and gives concrete expression to the abstract concepts of nationalism and love of the land, by holding and waving the national flag, singing the national anthem, participating in parades, wearing folk costumes, and participating in, what George Mosse has called "the liturgical cult of nationalism."[273] Through this "liturgical cult," the state attempts to unite its citizens and enhance its legitimacy and authority. For instance, the state announced to celebrate the day of Imom-i A'zam as a national holiday. This day is attributed to Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, the founder of the Hanafī school of Sunnī practice. This holiday is now celebrated by the whole country as a holiday of the Tajik nation regardless of their actual confessional or religious affiliations.

Musical Contests at State-sponsored Festivals

At state-sponsored festivals and celebrations regionally and nationally, *qasīda-khonī* is often performed as part of musical contests. Musical contests, as such, are grounded in Soviet cultural policy, which aimed to establish the spirit of socialist competition. Contests were organized between districts, *sovkhozes* and *kolkhozes*, and *brigades*[274] to provide a venue for musicians from across the provinces to display their skills and share their art. Winners of these contests were

[273] George L. Mosse, "Mass Politics and the Political Liturgy of Nationalism," in *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea,* ed. Eugene Kamenka (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), 40.

[274] *Sovkhoz* the abbreviated form of Russian word (*sovetskoye khozyaistvo*) and *kolkhoz* is (*kollektivnoye khozyaistvo*) were two agricultural system introduced by Soviet Union in Tajikistan in 1920s. *Sovkhoz* was the state-owned farm, which the workers were recruited from landless rural areas and they received their regulated wages, whereas *kolkhoz* was a combination of small individual farms that worked collectively. *Brigades* were small groups of *sovkhoz* workers that had a *brigade* (lead) to manage the work. For more information on the Soviet Union's agricultural system in Central Asia, see CSÁKI, CSABA, and ZVI LERMAN. "Land Reform and Farm Sector Restructuring in the Former Soviet Union and Russia." *Aula* 14, no. 4 (1992): 7-22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41490034. Accessed, November 25, 2015.

awarded state prizes. The Soviet cultural policy viewed art and culture as essential domains of socio-political intervention.

The *Andaleb*, an annual musical contest of contemporary Tajikistan announced by the Ministry of Culture, provides a compelling vehicle for the promotion of state-sanctioned nationalism through music and dance. The first round of the contest plays out at the village level. The best performers are then selected from each village and come together to participate at the district level contests. After the competition at the district level, juries decide the best performers, bring them together to represent a particular region at the competition, in Khorog. In Khorog the juries will then select the best performers from each part of the GBAO to form a group to represent the GBAO at the national level, at an event in Dushanbe.

The *Andaleb* Festival in the GBAO

I attended a concert by a group that was part of the overall *Andaleb* festival from the GBAO in Dushanbe in August 2014. The concert took place in the *Filarmoniya-yi Davlatī-yi Tojikiston* [Tajikistan State Philharmony]. To open the concert, the organizer made a speech and announced the program at the music festival and the concert. The festival was dedicated to the celebration of the Independence Day of Tajikistan that was scheduled the following month. Fully aware of the political importance of the event, the performers addressed issues of nationality and unity of the nation by singing songs devoted to the day and theme. They included songs about unity, the peace achieved in the country, and good moral behavior. Additionally, they performed thematic dances related to the event. Wearing costumes that represented the colors of the national flag and incorporating elements of dance and costumes specific of various regions of Tajikistan.

In addition to the musical performance, an exhibition was held where artists from the GBAO presented food styles, clothing, paintings, books, and musical instruments related to the "culture of the Pamirīs." The performances included dance as well as choral, solo, and group performances of

folk music. *Qasīda-khonī* was also part of the program, and in combination with the whole spectacle it illustrated the "culture of the region" and its contribution to the national sentiment.

Among the seven performances given at the program, the group from the GBAO had two that were related to the *qasīda-khonī* practice. The first performance involved a *balandzikom* or *tanbur* solo by a male member of the group and the second was given by a group of women who performed *qasīda-khonī* accompanied not only by the folk musical instruments – the *rubob*, *balandzikom* or *tanbur*, and *daf* – but also by modern instruments with metal strings. The performers were dressed in special clothing that related to the local costumes of the Pamirīs, white shirts or dresses with embroidered necklines and sleeves and Pamirī hats known as *skid* or *toqī*, along with colorful Pamirī woolen socks and traditional boots known as *shishk* (in the Wakhi language) or *pekh* (in the Shughni language). Unlike *qasīda-khonī* in funeral ceremonies, the texts chosen were short and related to the national occasion. Two of the women played the *rubob*, one the *balandzikom* or *tanbur*, another the *daf* (a male *daf* player accompanied her). One performer each played the *tablak*, [clay kettledrum] the *ghijak* [violin] the *soz* [the long-necked string instrument] the *qashqarcha* [5-stringed, fretted and plucked lute] and the *labchang* [mouth harp]. The performers sat on the ground, unlike other *qasīda-khonī* performances on stage, where the performers sit on chairs.

Both performances received the highest scores, within the all Tajikistanī competition and the group performance of the women was broadcast on national television for several days. At the end of the festival, the best performers from each region of Tajikistan came together for a group concert, called "*Gulchin*" ["Bouquet," meaning special selection], in which the *qasīda-khonī* performance of the Pamirī Ismaili women was also included.

The same performance of *qasīda-khonī* has been staged before the state celebration in Khorog when the Pamirī Ismailis celebrated the second anniversary of the establishment of the Ismaili Council in Tajikistan. At that performance only four female performers had been on the stage; two

of them played the *daf*, one the *tanbur*, and another the *rubob*. The women played and sang together as a choir, and the songs were devoted to Imom Alī, the Prophet, and the *Imom-i Zamon*.

All these stage performances of *qasīda-khonī* were starkly different from the performances at mourning ceremonies and in the *jamoat-khona*. For stage performances, the *qasīda*-khons select specific texts that meet the agenda of that particular stage performance. Such occasions as the festival, as mentioned above give individuals a feeling of connection to the larger society. Ganjina, one of the performers, told me that, "One of the program's agendas was to perform traditional (*sunnatī*) or local (*mahallī*) music. We chose *qasīda-khonī* and performed it as a group because *qasīda-khonī* is our traditional music."[275] Here Ganjina refers to *qasīda-khonī* as a "traditional musical form" to give it a regional nuance in the context of the national festival. However, her categorization might have been different if asked in the context of religious or mourning ceremonies, because in the context of religious or mourning ceremonies as was mentioned by other "true" *qasida-khon*s this music is referred to as spiritual music (*musiqi-yi ruhonī*).[276]

The *Andaleb* celebration, as highlighted earlier, was orchestrated, controlled, and structured by the state. It displayed the particularities of regional music in an aggregated way as a symbol of regional identity and at the same time part of collective Tajik heritage. With the performance of songs about the nation and national unity to regional musical tunes, the event was used to build and express a national sentiment. *Qasīda-khonī* was deemed appropriate to be performed that way, too. This shows the power of *qasīda-khonī* as a musical genre to construct this kind of meaning and illustrates some of the processes by which overarching identities are shaped and articulated.

[275] Ganjina, interview, August 2013, Dushanbe.
[276] See the discussion about this point on pages 109-130 of this chapter.

Qasida-Khonī and Building of National Identity Outside

The performance of *qasīda-khonī* can be observed during international music festivals and concerts, under rubrics like world mystical music events, world music festivals, international musical conferences, and so forth. International stage performances serve as a vehicle for projecting the "national identity of Tajikistan" in the global arena. The Pamir Ensemble is currently very active on the international tour circuit. Since their reestablishment in 2004, they have traveled to many countries around the world, participating in music festivals as well as taking part in international academic conferences related to musicology. The Pamir Ensemble is also referred to as the "Badakhshan Ensemble" in global settings, as it is an ensemble consisting mainly of performers from the Pamirs, although it does have a few members from other regions of Tajikistan as well.[277] Additionally, the embellishment of the stage costumes worn by the members of the Ensemble is an amalgam of folk embroidery patterns of the western and southern regions of the country, which illustrates that the Ensemble is not bound exclusively to the Pamir region, but is meant to represent the broader spectrum of the Tajik nation.

When *qasīda-khonī* is performed on the international stage, modifications in terms of structure and organization are introduced according to the requirements and norms handed out by the organizers. The *qasīda-khon*s generally wear specifically created costumes, play non-traditional musical instruments, and on some occasions dancing is also part of their performance. The performers expect to be paid and are applauded by the audience. Two folk ensembles of the Pamirī Ismailis are on the international place presently engaged in the performance of religious songs, and they have competing musical styles, instruments, vocalists, texts, and costumes. The members of the Samo Ensemble primarily come from the Rushan and Bartang regions of the GBAO, while the musicians of the Pamir Ensemble mainly come from the Shughnan region. While the Samo

[277] For instance, the ensemble's flautist hails from southern Tajikistan.

Ensemble is still striving for acknowledgment, the Pamir Ensemble is already internationally recognized, having been established for some time. They have had many international tours and have worked in cooperation with international NGOs interested in the musical culture of the region.

The Ismaili spiritual and devotional tradition has a strong influence on these two ensembles' musical repertoire, evidenced by the inclusion of *qasīda-khonī* as part of their music program and taking it to the international musical stage. Aqnazar and Olucha, members of the Pamir Ensemble, have performed *qasīda-khonī* at many international festivals.[278] Sohiba, the only female member of the Ensemble, dances to the music during their performances, although in customary Pamirī religious practice it would be considered inappropriate for anyone to dance during *qasīda-khonī*. For the outsider purpose, however, element of dance is being used to enhance the aesthetic experience of the performance.[279]

As *qasīda-khon*s, Aqnazar, and Olucha's role on this world stage is different from the role they play as *qasīda-khon*s in religious practices in the Pamirs. They are abroad introduced as members of the ensemble that performs, among other things, devotional songs. As we noted in Chapter 2, another difference is that singers of *qasīda-khonī* are introduced as "performers from Tajikistan," mentioning the nation, rather than as *qasīda-khon*s from a particular region of the country. On these international occasions, their music is articulated as national music as well as world music. It is recorded and appreciated in this quality by official national institutions and international

[278] These include: the Festival of World Sacred Music in Fez, Morocco in 2007; the 29th Week of Sacred Music of Segovia in Spain in 2011; the Konya International Mystic Music Festival in 2014; the International Conference on "Music, Art and Spirituality in Central Asia," in Venice, in 2015; the Cross Culture Festival in Warsaw in 2015; the Académie Diplomatique Internationale in Paris in 2015; and Festival Asien Intérieure by Ateliers d'ethnomusicologie in Geneva and Ascona. For more detais, see "Badakhshan Ensemble Performs in Paris"; available at: http://www.theismaili.org/heritage-expressions/badakhshan-ensemble-performs-paris-support-akdn-and-community (last accessed December 14, 2015).

[279] See the photo, Sohiba dancing during the *qasīda-khonī* in the Appendix G.

organizations. The institutions help the performers to develop their work through funding and media promotion. In the state's national interest, these performers act as officials of cultural diplomacy between countries. The musicians and singers are invited to participate in cultural activities in other countries organized and supported by the Tajikistani government and by international organizations.

Musical Ensembles

In the Soviet Union, folk traditions were used to serve national ideology, and various cultural performances were organized for people to travel within the Soviet republics or perform at the central capital, Moscow. Their art was defined as "professional" and the concept of "professional art" was championed, which our context eventually in 1936 led to the formation of the first professional Music and Drama Theatre in Khorog, the capital of Tajik Badakhshan.[280] The Theatre organized musical and theatrical performances that promoted Communist ideology and Soviet national sentiment. This led to the establishment of the first musical ensemble in the region, called "Pamir Ensemble of Song and Dance." Ghulomaidar Ghulomaliev and V.C. Smirnov was the founder of this ensemble, and in 1941 the ensemble traveled to Moscow to participate in an event titled *Dekadi Tadzhikskogo Literatury i Iskusstva* [Decade of Tajik Literature and Art], where it represented the Soviet Tajik nation. It was well-received.[281]

The ensemble from the Pamirs included *qasīda-khonī* as part of their repertoire, but it was introduced as *falak-i Badakhshon* because of the regime's suppression of religious practices and

[280] Moyonsho Nazarshoev, *Sokhtmon-i madanī dar Badakhshon* [Culture Building in Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1985), 115.

[281] E. K. Hojibekov. "Iz istorii sozdaniya i raspada ansamblya pesni i plyaski "Pamir" v Respublike Tadzhikistan (1940-1961 gg.) [History of establishment and collapse of "Pamir Ensemble of Song and Dance in Republic of Tajikistan (1940-1960)]" *Uspekhi sovremennoi nauki, [Achievements of contemporary science],* 2:7, (2016): 149-151. See also the photo of the ensemble in Appendix H.

all allusions to it at that time.[282] The ensemble was introduced as a representative of Tajik culture and represented the Tajik *narod* [people] to the multiethnic audience of Soviet Moscow. Stalin attended this concert and shared his impressions afterward when he met the performers personally at the Kremlin. He indicated that, "…Tajiks are a special *narod* [people] … and their artistic work is very delicate, and their ancient culture is embedded in their music, in their songs and dance…".[283] The Soviet newspapers wrote about the event and considered the contribution of the Tajik artists to the abovementioned Dekada as the celebration of art of the Soviet nations.[284] The Ensemble was awarded a medal of *Peshqadamon-i San'at* [Advanced Artists], and later on, the singers and musicians were nominated as *Artist-i Khizmatnishondoda-i Respublika*[285] [Artists Devoted their Service to the Republic].[286]

The Pamir Ensemble that exists today was revived after the independence of Tajikistan under the management of Sohiba Dawlatshoeva and now performs internationally. It had emerged from the "Pamir Ensemble of Song and Dance" which lost its status partly in 1961 and entirely after the collapse of the Soviet Union, during the bloody civil war.

The Aga Khan Music Initiative

One of the organizations that help Central Asian musicians to participate in the international arena and to revive and develop their musical culture is the Aga Khan Music Initiative (hereafter AKMI). AKMI is part of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) that works through the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC). The AKMI commenced its activities in 2000, to assist musicians in developing indigenous artistic traditions and cultural heritage and in promoting them

[282] Mahingul Nazardodova, interview, October 2011, Khorog.
[283] From the speech of I.V. Stalin, during the reception of the Tajik delegates in the Kremlin for the "Decade of Tajik Art" on 22 April 1941, in I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniya* [Essays] Vol. 18 (Tver: Information Publishing Centre "Soyuz," 2006), 211-212.
[284] Moyonsho Nazarshoev, *Sokhtmon-i madanī dar Badakhshon* [Culture Building in Badakhshan], 116.
[285] "*Artist*" is a Russian word usually used in the context of Tajik musical culture to refer to singers or musicians.
[286] Moyonsho Nazarshoev, *Sokhtmon-i madanī dar Badakhshon* [Culture Building in Badakhshan], 116.

internationally. It helps local musicians in Central Asia to master their skills, to revive their musical traditions and connect their work with global networks of artists, musicians, and world musical organizations; it supports networks of music schools and centers; raises the prestige of traditional music and musicians; and documents and disseminates Central Asian music through recordings, concert tours, films, and educational outreach activities. In Tajikistan, the AKMI helps and supports the Academy of *Maqom* in Dushanbe, a newly established academy to revitalize the Tajik classical music *Shashmaqom*. It also supports the *Khunar*, a music center that offers training programs to children on the music of northern Tajikistan, and furthermore AKMI helps the network of music schools and master-apprentice training programs; and supports many ensembles to perform globally on international stages.[287]

The Question of Authenticity

The question of authenticity was raised earlier in the context of the performance of *qasīda-khonī* at *jamoat-khona*s. The deep transformations wrought in the practice of the *qasīda-khonī* today have resulted in a lively debate among the authenticity of its performers and audiences. The debate centers on whether *qasīda-khonī* should be performed on stage, whether women should participate in its performance, and other specific instruments should be used. Senior performers, such as Zaimkhon, Kholmamad, and Azizkhon, as discussed earlier, are not in agreement with the attitude of the younger generation towards the performance and the specific institutional influence on the performance. They are not content that *qasīda-khonī* is performed on stages as a concert item and received solely as entertainment. Additionally, they question the use of some specific musical instruments during such performances. They believe and feel that these novelties devalue *qasīda-*

[287] Theodore Levin, "Revitalizing Musical Traditions: The Aga Khan Music Initiative." In *The Music of Central Asia*, ed. Theodore Levin Saida Daukeeva and Kòchùmkulova Ėlmira, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 571–90. Also for more information on the activities of Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the AKMI, see their website: www.akdn.org.

khonī and obliterate the purpose and function that the performance has had in society for a thousand years.

Such views obviously represent a more traditionalist school of thought on *qasīda-khonī*, which considers the performance only appropriate for mourning ceremonies and religious events where a social bond is forged among those who observe it, and they "share a mutual belief in the descriptive and prescriptive validity of the symbolic contents and accept the authenticity of one another's intentions."[288]

The elderly musicians define the authenticity of *qasīda-khonī* in the context of mourning ceremonies alone. In such a context, *qasīda-khonī* acts as mediation between God and human beings, between the Prophet, the Imam and the believers. In this view, the performance transforms listeners, participants, and the bereaved families emotionally and spiritually. On the other hand, contemporary public cultural performances of *qasīda-khonī* seem not to be significant in the same manner. According to the elder *qasīda-khon*s, the "shared understanding of intention and content"[289] through which *qasīda-khonī* has an impact on the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims and in which a social bond and identity are forged is missing in these new-type performances.

In contrast, many of the younger *qasīda-khon*s, who are well known because of their showing up at regional, national, and international occasions, do not agree with these points of view. They claim that by performing in concerts, they bring a high value to the tradition of *qasīda-khonī*. They believe that they are introducing it to a wider audience, taking it from the village and ritual settings into an urban, cosmopolitan setting. They claim that their performance does not diminish the value

[288] Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Cultural Pragmatics: Social performance between ritual and strategy" in *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual,* eds. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29.
[289] Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Performance and Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 30.

of *qasīda-khonī*, but rather preserves it in a broader cultural milieu. The performance of *qasīda-khonī* on stage, as a concert program, in their view, legitimizes not only the traditional performances but also innovations, like those seen in the work of musical groups such as the Samo Ensemble, the Pamir Ensemble, and many others. Although it might not connote the same meaning as the performances at mourning ceremonies or other religious events, it produces a value in terms of cultural production and inspiration.

The other two points of debate include the participation of female performers in *jamoat-khona*s and concerts, and in their dancing during the performance on stage. These two points challenge the prevailing view that *qasīda-khonī* is a male preserve and that dance is not appropriate in light of the solemnity of the songs. However, some of my informants did not find women's participation to be no problem, as the Imam of the Time always advocates the equality of women and men in the Ismaili community.

It is through the lens of this debate on the issue of authenticity, and we are able to interpret the transitional nature of relationships between national identity and *qasīda-khonī* in the global(ized) context. It aids in building understandings of the nature of *qasīda-khonī* in contemporary cultural practice as it moves between artifice and authenticity. This is partly due to the effects of standardization enforced by religious as well as state institutions. Institutionalization challenges the members of the community to re-examine their customary practice. But the net result of this process is not loss alone. One feature of the Pamirī Ismailis' adaptation to the institutional norms has contributed to innovations in their customary practice that paved a way to the connection of the global Ismaili network. This has involved the blending of novelty and local elements of practices, thereby forging an identity both local and global.

Looking at the debate around the performance of *qasīda-khonī* in its various contexts, I have argued that the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims have integrated this performance into multiple domains of their

life, while it continues to represent conflicting views, cultural complexity, contradictions, and institutional differentiation. Through the *qasīda-khonī* performance, performers fuse religious, social, and cultural elements and individually, or collectively, question and, at the same time, reflect on their actions in the new contexts of their social existence. A general tension undeniably exists in regard to the preservation of the practice, which mostly stems from the older performers who claim that part of their heritage is on the verge of disappearing.

Conclusion

Depending on where and when it is performed, *qasīda-khonī* accrues different meanings. This chapter focused on recent *qasīda-khonī* performances, particularly given the enormous national unrest that has recently occurred in Tajikistan. I did not corral the multiple functions and existence of identities into one coherent purpose or identity, nor did I seek to resolve them into separate categories. I aim to acknowledge that the meanings and identities produced by *qasīda-khonī* are multiple, conditional, and simultaneously hold various determinants, from different settings, regions, religions, and practices. I have attempted to show the dynamic nature of the *qasīda-khonī* performance in relation to these diverse, overlapping and interconnected contexts that produce multiple identities.[290]

As we have seen, during particular national occasions, the traditional musical culture has been selected and elaborated to become emblematic of regional and national music and culture in Tajikistan. For the people of the GBAO, it might be a ritual and even celebratory, but for outsiders, it is informative and educational. What links these two understandings together is the combination of their performativity and communal aspects. During mourning ceremonies and religious festivals, or on the stage, the song texts are about unity, justice, forgiveness, and friendship and are understood as the embodiment of history and experience in the post-civil war situation and the

[290] Compare David Bennett, ed., *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998).

building of a unified national sentiment. Through *qasīda-khonī* performances, as Picard and Robinson would put it, "whether staged or non-staged, individuals and groups discursively manifest their visions of the world and create meaningful frameworks of being together."[291] *Qasīda-khonī* performances, as public or private expression, serve various groups of people and express a unified collective awareness. They allow people to reflect on themselves and their world to forge new identities and transform the old ones.[292]

Qasīda-khonī on stage demonstrates the new relationship between music, religion, culture, and politics. Musical events such as *Andaleb* and others are profoundly political, even though they are frequently presented as being only musical or cultural events. The venues where these performances take place, along with their symbolic features and content of their song texts, make them political, especially when the events run and sponsored by the state authority.

All holidays that are celebrated in Tajikistan today have a nationalist focus, even religious ones. For instance, *qasīda-khonī* is performed as a spiritual practice at cultural centers belonging to the state, which are decorated with nationalist symbols such as the portrait of the President and the national flag, along with the portrait of the Aga Khan. The performance aspect of *qasīda-khonī* in its various contexts discussed above serves to socialize members not only within their community but with the nation as a whole, to reaffirm their commitment to shared values and to sustain the integration of society. During non-religious events, people from various social and cultural backgrounds socialize, without restrictions on participation. Inclusion, in this case, refers to the ideological point that the various *qasīda-khonī* performances are in relation to the institutions they

[291] David Picard and Mike Robinson, "Remaking Worlds: Festivals, Tourism and Change," in *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*, eds. David Picard and Mike Robinson (Buffalo and Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2006), 12.
[292] David Picard and Mike Robinson, eds., *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds* (Ontario: Channel View Publications, 2006).

serve, whether religious, national, or international. In this way, they accelerate the distribution of one feature of culture to more locations and audiences.

Qasīda-khonī serves several integrational functions in society today. But this may obscure the innovative artistic and cultural trends it has also fostered. For example, holidays or public celebrations provide opportunities "for societal change and embody new conceptions of social relations."[293] This is illustrated in the development of new roles for women in religious and national festivities, especially for female *qasīda-khons*. Through innovations in the *qasīda-khonī* performance, especially by fusing religious and national discourses, the Pamirī Ismailis uphold dual loyalties - local commitments that do not conflict with dedication to the larger, national society. By performing at these national festivals, the performers consciously represent their ethnicity and religiosity along with their loyalty to the state, creating mutually reinforcing identities.

[293] Amitai Etzioni, "Holidays and Rituals: Neglected Seedbeds of Virtue," in *We Are What We Celebrate: Understanding Holidays and Rituals*, eds. Amitai Etzioni and Jared Bloom (New York and London: New York University Press, 2004), 15-16.

Chapter 5: Performative Texts: The Texts of *Qasīda-khonī*

Qasīda-khonī in practice connects orality, writing, and performativity. While the *qasīda-khonī* song texts primarily come from an oral tradition, they have also been preserved and transmitted in written form. In many cultures, orality and writing are strongly connected. A work may be composed orally but transmitted in written form, or it may be written but spread orally through chanting, singing, or recitation by performers who know it by heart.[294] The *qasīda-khonī* performance embodies such an intertwined history of orality and writing.

Following Ali Asani's view,[295] this chapter conceptualizes *qasīda-khonī* as performative practice, with modes of expression: the sonic and the literary arts. Van den Berg notes that "in the context of Badakhshan oral and literate poetry have merged into performances of poetry and function as one whole, and the quality of the poetry is defined by the dedication and attitude of the people towards them."[296] Both in written and unwritten form, the song texts[297] play an integral part in the *qasīda-khonī* performance.

Historically speaking, these texts are significant to the history and life of Islam in the Pamirs. Since they came to the region, the song texts have played the role of sacred scripture in the religious life of the people, and are a vital part of their religious identity and practice until today. The performance of these songs indicates that they do not merely represent individual artistic expression, but also have social and religious significance. The songs transmit religious knowledge

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[294] Linda Hess, *Bodies of Song: Kabir Oral Traditions and Performative Worlds in North India* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[295] Ali Asani, "The Ginans as Performative Text" (paper presented at the South Asia Seminar Series "Text and Performance in India" at The University of Texas at Austin, April 7, 2016).

[296] Gabrielle van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan: A Study on the Songs and Poems of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2004), 31.

[297] These texts are basically literary texts written in prose with poetry interspersed here and there, but as part of the *qasīda-khonī* performance they are underscored with melody and are sung. Therefore, in this study I refer to them as song texts.

and offer guidance on a variety of religious and ethical matters. They serve to "celebrate a feast or a ceremony, to educate or to counsel people, and divert the mind of various audiences."[298]

In the context of socio-political changes in Tajikistan, many old and new song texts have become part of the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire and serve nationalistic purposes in the country today. Some song texts, as a result of global Ismaili as well as Tajik state institutionalization, have been subject to restrictive policies and are no longer performed. They have become the quasi-archival materials. This chapter discusses the song texts; their performance in various contexts; their formal variability; collectioning and archiving; and their dissemination. It examines the relational, contextual, and functional quality of the song texts and the relationship between these texts and the people who memorize, sing, and listen to them, as well as the effect of institutionalization on their performance today.

Text Collections: The *Bayoz*

The song texts under discussion include various genres of poetry and are assembled from literary sources. They exist as written collections, little booklets known as *bayoz,* in possession of *qasīda-khon*s. This is the reason why the *qasīda-khon*s say that their performance is "based on the *bayoz*" (*az rū-yi bayoz*). Before *bayoz* collections were assembled individual *qasīda-khon*s orally transmitted songs from generation to generation. The song texts were subsequently preserved in the form of handwritten collections in either the Persian or much later Cyrillic script.[299] These handwritten collections have been recreated by performers from earlier books or their predecessors' previous collections and in recent times, by transcribing them from cassette recordings. Today one can also find the *bayoz* disseminated on audiotapes, CDs, and DVDs.[300] Some of the *bayoz* are by their owner or compiler beautifully decorated with Persian miniatures, calligraphy, or other

[298] Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan,* 30.
[299] See the image of the *bayoz* in Appendix I.
[300] See the picture in Appendix J.

embellishing motifs. Even today, the *qasīda-khon*s treat their personal *bayoz* with a great deal of respect and care, cherishing them as "sacred relics." They are therefore kept in a place which only the owner can access. This privacy also serves the mundane function of keeping them secret, as the songs constitute the artistic capital of the *qasīda-khon*, which they would not want to share with people they do not know or trust.

The term *bayoz*, in the scholarly literature, is understood differently depending upon the context of its use. Pritchett describes *bayoz* in the context of Urdu poetry as "the ubiquitous little notebook that lovers of poetry carried around with them for recording verses that caught their fancy."[301] Even though *bayoz* denotes a notebook kept by poets and calligraphers for writing notes, and drafts in various contexts,[302] in Central Asia the *bayoz* most often refers to a collection of religious or semi-religious texts that are sung or chanted, which may include verses of the Qur'an, Islamic mythology, and Sūfī poems.[303] Van den Berg also describes the *bayoz* as a collection containing poems by different poets written in the Persian-Arabic and the modern Tajik script, i.e. Cyrillic.[304] In the context of the Pamirī Ismailis, *bayoz* refers to the individual collection of song texts a *qasīda-khon* possesses and performs during his performance. Musicians who perform in wedding ceremonies and concerts also possess similar collections of songs; however, they do not refer to their collections as *bayoz* but *bayd* or *soz*. Among the Pamirī Ismailis, the term *bayoz* is exclusively applied to booklet containing the collection of songs performed at *qasīda-khonī*.

The song texts of the *bayoz* generally include various genres of Persian poetry such as *qaṣīda*s [ode], panegyric devoted to kings, prophets, etc, *ghazal*s,[a genre of poetry consists of minimum

[301] Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 66.
[302] Jiri Becka, "Tajik Literature from the 16th Century to the Present," in *History of Iranian Literature,* eds. Jan Rypka and Karl Jahn (Dordrecht – Holland: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 483-605.
[303] Razia Sultanova, *From Shamanism to Sufism: Women, Islam and Culture in Central Asia* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 138.
[304] Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan,* 33.

five couplets and varies thematically], *mukhammas* [a strophic form of poetry consists of five lines], *qit'as* [quatrain is a stanzaic poem in four lines, usually with alternate rhymes.], *munojots* [supplication], etc.[305] This poetry addresses various themes, but the dominant subjects of the song texts are religious, didactical, and mystical. The texts primarily come from classical Persian poets such as Rūdakī (d. 941), Nāṣir-i Khusraw (d. 1088), Ṣanā'ī (d. 1141), Shams-i Tabrezī (d. 1248), Rūmī (d. 1273), Ḥāfiz (d. 1325), Jāmī (d. 1492) and others. The *qasīda-khon*s do not classify their song texts into different poetic genres; in fact, they do not have sufficient knowledge about the poetic genres to do so. They refer to them as *qasoid*, *qasīda*, or *maddo* regardless of what genres of poetry they come from. In many of the *bayoz*, the poets are not named, and the *qasīda-khon*s guess their authorship, most often attributing the texts to Shams-i Tabrezī or Nāṣir-i Khusraw.

The length of the song texts varies: shorter compositions may give room to four to ten stanzas, while longer ones may have several hundred verses. There are no titles for the short poems, but longer song texts have titles given mostly by *qasīda-khon*s that reflect the theme of the text. Many of the song texts are didactic in nature, imparting instructions on religious and other matters. Other texts are narratives that contain hagiographic accounts of the Imams, mainly of Alī, and many others are supplications or mystical in nature. The song texts have long been a central part of the religious life of the Pamirī Ismailī community and continue to contribute to the living religious tradition as well as social and cultural relations.

Often Persian poems by local poets are also included in the *bayoz* as proper *qasīda-khonī* song texts. Scholars of Tajik literature note that the locals of Badakhshan began to write poems in Persian around the 15th-16th century.[306] A number of the song texts included in the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire

[305] For more on the sung poetry performed in *qasida-khonī*, see Gabrielle van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains*, Chapter 5, 214-300.
[306] Amirbek Abibov, *Az Ta'rīkh-i Adabiyot-i Tojik dar Badakhshon* [On the History of Tajik Literature in Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Adib, 1971), 5; and id.,, *Ganj-i Badakhshon* [The Treasure of Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Adib, 1972).

in the Pamirs today were written by local poets such as Shohfutūr, Qudrat-i Shughnonī, Adim-i Shughnonī, Muborak-i Wakhonī, Mulloshamsher-i Wakhonī, and Shohziyo, all of whom wrote in Persian. Before the Soviet period, poets tended to write mystical and panegyric poems with religious themes; however, this type of poetry was no longer composed during the Soviet period.[307]

When the Soviet Union became dominant, the local poets began to write their poems which suited the Soviet ideology. The poems of Mirsaid-i Mirshakar (d. 1993), Nodir Shanbezoda (d. 1980), Shirin Bunyod (d. 2011), and many others, for example, were devoted to the prosperity of the Communist regime and system. Many of those as mentioned above, classical Persian poets have come to be considered "Tajik national poets," and their poetry was included in the literature textbooks at schools and universities. Their poetry was interpreted to suit the ideology of socialism they perceivedly "promoted and expressed anti-feudal sentiments, equality, freedom, and patriotism in support of class struggle and inequality in the oppressed feudal society."[308]

In the post-Soviet period, local poets began to write devotional poems once again. After 1995, the poets often exposed their religious experience of encountering the Imam of the Time or focused on praising their Imam for his constant assistance during the time of crisis. These poems were written in both Tajik and the local Pamirī languages. Today, the *bayoz* of many *qasīda-khon*s contain song texts that are written not only in Tajik, but also in the Pamirī languages of Shughnī, Wakhī, and Ishkoshimī.

Although this minstrel tradition of the Ismailis in Badakhshan has its characteristics and particularities, it is rooted in the Persian literary tradition and Persian minstrel practices that go

[307] Ibid. pp 1-8.
[308] A. Iloliev, *The Sufi Sage of Pamir* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 3.

back to the Sasanian Empire and the last king Khosrow Parvīz II (590-628 a.d.).[309] Khosrow II's reign was considered to be a golden age of music.

One of these musicians and poets was Bārbad-i Marvazī, who was considered the most distinguished minstrel poet of his time.[310] A famous legend speaks of Barbad's skill focuses on when he notified the king of the death of the latter's highly admired horse, Shabdīz. Nobody in court dared to inform the king of the death of the horse, so Bārbad-i Marvazī played music and sang a song that captured the king emotionally and made him announce the death of his admirable horse himself.[311] This story helps us see that the tradition of minstrel poetry is not a recent phenomenon. Studying Persian literature in schools, where such stories are mentioned in order to emphasize the importance of music and song, has probably influenced the mindset of the people in Badakhshan. In all likelihood it has influenced the existence of this minstrel tradition among the Pamirī Ismailī Muslims, where different genres of poetry are sung at various occasions to mark a variety of social symbolisms.

Collecting and Circulating the Bayoz

It is very difficult to identify the historical root of the *bayoz qasīda-khon*s possess. They have collected these texts from various sources and places. These texts have been obtained through copying and recopying and have traveled through individual collections from one place to another. The performance of these texts has made them accessible to the public, and the performance of these texts through *qasīda-khonī* have therefore taken on a heightened significance in the religious, social, and cultural lives of the Pamirī Ismailis and beyond.

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[309] Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan*, 422.
[310] Ibid., 28.
[311] A. Taffazoli, "Bārbad minstrel – poet of the court of the Sasanian King," in *Encyclopedia of Iranica* (December, 1988); available at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/barbad-minstrel (last accessed November 13, 2014).

The song texts that are inherited from *qasīda-khon* predecessors are considered "special" (*makhsūs*), and the "speciality" of these texts is reflected in their contents, which are religiously significant to the performers. Therefore, the *qasīda-khon*s more often called them "remembrance of God" (*zikr-i Khudo*). Likewise, their "speciality" is connected to the contexts where these texts are performed. In this case the values of these texts increase when performed at *qasīda-khonī* in the mourning ceremonies and religious events. Therefore the texts are usually treated as "sacred" relics because for many of the *qasīda-khon*s and their audience relate them to the distant past of the Pamirī Ismaili practices, and which were important vehicle to understand their religious customs and are, therefore, kept in special places to which only the *qasīda-khon*s have access.

To obtain song texts for *qasīda-khonī,* some of the performers would travel long distances in order to receive permission to copy them from their owners. For example, a *qasīda-khon* from Shirgin village named Qaraboi, traveled 50 km by foot to receive song texts from Zaimkhon. Additionally, he needed to stay for several days at Zaimkhon's house in order to copy the song texts by hand from the latter's *bayoz.*

Zaimkhon possesses many song texts, a number of which he inherited from his *ustod* Mullo Shamsher. These song texts from Mullo Shamsher are not made available to anyone for copying; Zaimkhon only shares them orally when he performs in public. The texts are so valuable to him that he is reluctant even to show his *bayoz.* When I asked Zaimkhon if I could take a look at his collection of song texts at our first meeting, he politely refused, saying that he had forgotten the keys to his box at his son's house. After we had met several times and I had won his trust, Zaimkhon eventually agreed to open the decorated wooden box in which he keeps the song texts. The wooden box was otherwise locked and placed out of the reach of others. Some of his texts were wrapped in cloth, and others were kept inside a handmade leather sheath.

Zaimkhon recalled that before the Soviets came to power, religious texts such as the *farmon*s of the Ismaili Imams, copies of the Qur'an and the *bayoz* were kept in special houses called *farmon-khona* [House of *Farmon*s]. The *farmon-khona*s served as an archive, more specifically a "sacred archive." The value of the texts has transformed the place into a sacred space where people worshipped and sought forgiveness and blessings. Historically, these houses were guarded under the patronage of the *pir*s. The texts were sacred and were read or performed at religious events. Up until now these texts are cherished and remained valuable as individual property and have a ritual function of their own.

Due to their high value within the Pamirī Ismaili religious culture, the song texts were given as awards to individual *qasīda-khon*s for their impressive performances at various occassions by the *pir*s who patronized *qasīda-khonī*. These *pir*s sponsored and supported the *qasīda-khon*s and invited them from various places, organizing gatherings that involved singing *qasīda*s and storytelling. For instance, Mamadsho, a late 19th-century *qasīda-khon* from the Ghund valley of Shughnan, was invited to a gathering organized by *pir* Sayyid Yusuf Alisho in Tem village near the city of Khorog. His performance was remarkable and was received with great respect by the participants and the *pir.* Before Mamadsho departed for his village, the *pir* rewarded him with a horse and a copy of a *bayoz,* which contained narrative song texts.[312] Shogun, a *qasīda-khon* from Shohdara valley of Shughnan, was invited to an assembly by his *pir,* who lived in Yumgan (today's Badakhshan in Afghanistan) at that time. After his performance, the *pir* awarded Shogun with a *bayoz* consisting of the poetry of Shams-i Tabrezī.

[312] Haidarmamad Tawakkalov, *An'ana-yi madhiyasaroi dar Badakhshon* [The tradition of singing *madhiya* in Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Donish, 2006), 34-35.

It should be noted that during the era of "pirship," as discussed in Chapter 1, the entire region of Badakhshan was divided into several religious territories that had their *pirs* and *khalīfas*.[313] Shogun's collection of song texts was then copied and recopied by his disciples, who composed their *bayoz*. The texts were performed at mourning ceremonies and gatherings of religious importance. The second generation of Shogun's disciples – Asansho, Isribsho, Muminsho, Kabutarsho, and many others – transmitted these song texts to others through their performances. Today, the third and fourth generations of Shogun's disciples, such as Abdulhakim, Olucha, and Ayoz, sing the song texts from the *bayoz* that have come down on them from Shogun.

Furthermore, the *pir* of the Rushan region, Shohgado, rewarded a late 19th-century *qasīda-khon* from the Bartang valley named Manshur with a *bayoz* for his excellent performance. It included poems of Forighī, a Badakhshanī poet from the 16th–17th centuries. Wherever Manshur went to perform after that, he carried the *bayoz* with him.[314]

Some of the song texts have been orally distributed in the region through individual *qasīda-khon*s' performances. It is through performance that famous narrative song texts of the region, such as *Panj Kishtī* [Five Ships], *Kalla-i Pusidasar* [The Rotten Skull], *Bahr-i Majnūn* [The Ocean of Majnun] and *Qissa-yi Kūr-u Chorsad Qator* [The Story of the Blind and the Four Hundred Caravans] have been distributed and widely recognized in the region. These narrative poems are in possession of many *qasīda-khon*s in the region today, although they are performed less due to the time restrictions that have been imposed on ritual practices.

The era of technology and the emergence of electronic media have also affected the way the songs are preserved and distributed today. Many of the song texts are disseminated on CDs and DVDs

[313] Aleksey Bobrinskoy, *Sekt Ismailiya v Ruskikh i Bukharskikh predelakh Sredney Azii* [The Ismaili Sect in the Russian Bukhara borderlands of Central Asia], *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* 1, [Ethnographic Accounts 1] Moscow (1902).
[314] Haidarmamad Tawakkalov, *An'ana-yi madhiyasaroi dar Badakhshon*, 57.

available in music shops, and young performers privately possess collections of recordings of *qasīda-khonī* performance. This illustrates the dramatic restructuring and reorientation of *qasīda-khonī,* which has "introduce[d] fundamental changes in traditional patterns of musical production, consumption, and meaning."[315] Having these CDs and DVDs readily available in the markets resituates *qasīda-khonī* and its song texts in the context of national and international commercial entertainment. The *qasīda-khon*s buy these CDs and DVDs in markets, some receive them as gifts, and others borrow these CDs and DVDs from their neighbors and relatives and make their copies of them. Ahmadbek, who is not a public performer of *qasīda-khonī* but sometimes practices for his own private contemplation in the evenings, has copied his father's *qasoid* from tape recordings to CDs because tape recorders are no longer in use, and CD and DVD players are more common nowadays. Although CDs and DVDs are kept for personal use and listening, they do not play a role in ritual contexts such as mourning ceremonies where *qasīda-khonī* is performed live.

The song texts with fundamentally philosophical and religious content have acquired socio-cultural significance in terms of their performance. In practical terms, the *bayoz* is not simply a textual support for *qasīda-khonī*. The complexity arises from perception, description, and interpretation of the interrelationship that exists between poetry, music, and the performative aspect inherent in the genre.

The Preservation of Song Texts

Institutionalization and Archiving

Although many of the song texts today are in the possession of *qasīda-khon*s in various versions and forms, a number of written copies and recordings are held by the Humanities Research Unit in Khorog. Prior to the establishment of the Research Unit, these texts were kept by the performers

[315] Peter Manuel, *Cassette Culture: Popular Music and Technology in North India* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 7.

or *pirs*. The Research Unit was established and initiated by the Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) in 1999.[316] This Unit aims to collect and document oral narratives, poems, and songs, including various *qasīda-khonī* texts in order to preserve and archive them. The files are utilized for research. In this setting, the texts are not performed but have instead become archival material. Archivization is significant for the physical preservation of the texts, but the delinking from performance uproots the song texts from their tradition.

As we have discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, due to state and religious institutional supervision, the narrative song texts are very rarely performed, and therefore elder *qasīda-khon*s are concerned about their disappearance. For the *qasīda-khon*s and the Pamirī Ismailī community, these song texts have historical significance, and they have played a significant role in building a regional and national identity.Their performative and oral transmissions increased as a vehicle for the preservation of unique forms of cultural knowledge. Such knowledge is endangered by globalization and institutionalization. As was have noted, many traditional *qasīda khonī* song texts are now excluded from the repertoire and not performed anymore due to the implementation of institutional rules. Although some institutions such as the AKHP and AKMI are involved in preserving and promoting traditional cultural performances, their focus is more on the actual musical performance than on the texts.

Since many of the song texts are not being performed frequently and therefore continue in existence mainly in written or recorded forms in the archives, elder *qasīda-khon*s fear that the tradition might disappear sooner or later. Zaimkhon and Azizkhon echoed this sentiment: “If they are not performed often, then people forget them. It is like if I don’t see you for many years, I might not be able to recognize you anymore.”[317] One song text is called *Ismoilnoma*. It is a narrative song

[316] Haidarmamad Tawakkalov, *An’ana-yi madhiyasaroi dar Badakhshon,* 67-68.
[317] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village..

that the *qasīda-khon*s in the Pamirs used to sing for the *Id-i Qurbon* (‘Id al Aḍḥa) celebrations.[318] Today, the younger generation in many parts of the GBAO does not know about the existence of these texts. The same situation has occurred with the song text called “*Al-Muborak*,” which was traditionally performed in the Pamirs at the beginning of the month of Ramadan.[319] This song text is only rarely performed today and only in remote places, such as the Bartang valley; at that in other parts of the region it is now unknown.

Following Jacques Derrida’s critique of institutionalization and domiciliation in the making of archives,[320] I argue that the process of collecting manuscripts and recordings by institutions has disrupted the interface between the textual and the performative traditions. What I am attempting to highlight here is that the increase in the archivization of textual sources has detached the texts from the performative practices of *qasīda-khonī*. I would argue that processes of institutionalization while preserving the texts, disassembled the practice from its cultural contexts and everyday understanding, which will lead to museumization in the end.

These song texts can only regain their full significance and maintain their existence when performed, but not as a detached physical object. It is the whole wealth of associations connected to the performance that form the essential core of the song texts. In this regard, Ruth Finnegan argues that “their [the song texts] existence depends on repeated and continued performances.”[321] Performance only can contribute to the survival of *qasīda-khonī* and allow it to keep up its former role in the community.

[318] Haidarmamad Tawakkalov, *An’ana-yi madhiyasaroi dar Badakhshon,* 138.
[319] Ibid., 140.
[320] Jacques Darrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).
[321] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 5.

The Reproduction of Song Texts

The physical song texts today are mostly copies reproduced from earlier *qasīda-khon*s' collections. Collections of the song texts that have been transcribed from written and oral sources contain many errors, which makes it very difficult not only to discern their meaning but also to ascertain their authorship. These song texts, or more usually just fragments of them which derive from manuscripts in possession of *qasīda-khon*s, have been altered through selection, emendation, and editing. This is another distinctive feature that contributes to the performative aspect of the song texts. When one compares scholarly editions of the published poems with the variety contained in the *bayoz* of the *qasīda-khon*s, *"*a process of textual interpolation becomes evident, which has resulted in local versions of poems maintaining differences unique to the Pamirīs."[322]

These song texts were copied conventionally by village scribes or by the *qasīda-khon*s themselves from other books, or they were put in writing through the transcription of performances or recordings. It should be noted that some of the elder *qasīda-khon*s were not literate, somebody sang and the scribes wrote down the songs for them. Tutiyo Kuchakshoeva, a woman in her fifties, told me that when she was young, her grandfather Maram asked her to write down all the song texts he knew by dictating them to her because he was illiterate. This example illustrates that literacy is not essential to *qasīda-khonī*, but it is the "oral formulation that plays a real part even in a fully literate culture today."[323] Today, these transcribed song texts are in possession of her brother Dawrugh, who does not practice *qasīda-khonī* himself but has kept the texts as part of his inheritance from his grandfather.

[322] Benjamin Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 46.
[323] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 22.

Some *qasīda-khon*s transcribe the song texts from cassette recordings. Mullo, a *qasīda-khon* from Shirgin village in the Wakhan, borrowed a cassette recording from his neighbor, who had bought the audio cassette in Khorog. Since he was not able to make a copy of the audio cassette, he transcribed all the song texts from the tape.

Modification and Variability of the Song Texts

Each *qasīda-khon*'s particular collection and presentation at a performance makes the performance of *qasīda-khonī* unique, but modification of the song texts takes place not only at the individual level of the *qasīda-khon*. It is instead obvious at the institutional level as well, where song texts are modified through the quest for uniformity which is imposed on the texts, especially in the *jamoat-khona* context. Lengthy narrative song texts are not performed in *jamoat-khona*s at all due to the limited time allowed for the performance, which means that the performers have to use sample short genres of poetry.

The continuous reproduction of the song texts in former times had resulted in the existence of variety of the texts. Paul Zumthor and Jean McGarry call this 'variability' *mouvance,* a term they use to refer to the mutation of oral poems that is likely to occur during performances of the poems.[324] Applying the term, Zumthor and McGarry illustrate the virtue of textual mobility, where textual variations evolve through rewriting, omission, replacement, displacement, rearrangement, and reworking by the performer who adapts the song text to a particular context. Ruth Finnegan refers to this process as "variability, the appearance and re-appearance of similar but non-identical versions of what in some sense has the same plot, motif, and theme."[325] These variations are defined in relation to the history, geography, time and space, and social relations of the performers. As

[324] Paul Zumthor and Jean McGarry, "The Impossible Closure of the Oral Text," in *Yale French Studies,* 67, (1984): 33.
[325] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 150.

Kolpakova says, "the text because of many reasons is subject to change in its function and meaning among various groups of people, age, taste, and based on the skill of the performer during a performance on various occasions and rituals."[326] The art and the meaning of these texts, "are realized not just in words, but also in the teller's skills, the occasion, or the actions, and reception of the audience."[327]

In studies of oral literature in Tajikistan, *qarinanokī* [variability], a term similar to Zumthor and McGarry's term *mouvance,* is used to characterize the main feature of oral literature. The academic collection and study of song texts began in Tajikistan in the 1920s and intensified during the 1950s and 1960s, with many books and articles published on the topic.[328] Ma'sumi writes about the genre of *ruboyī,* which is mainly sung during the *falak* section of *qasīda-khonī*, and says that "the texts of *ruboyī* [are] transmitted through a series of variations. They change according to time, the person who performs it, and the contexts where it is performed. It depends on the performer who might add or omit a few words and accommodates it according to his or her taste and inner feelings."[329] Rajab Amonov, who has studied folk songs, argues that the various versions of the texts exist because people use the *ruboyī* as a vehicle to express their inner self, its relation to the world, society, family, and life in general.[330]

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[326] N.P. Kolpakova, "*Varianty pesennikh zachinov*" [Variants of Songs Intonation] in *Printsipy tekstologicheskogo izucheniya folklora* [The Basics of textological analysis of folklore] ed. B.N., Putilov (Moskva: Nauka, 1966), 187. Translation of quote Ch.6.

[327] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*, 18. See also Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[328] A.N. Boldyrev, "Badakhshanskiy folklor" [The Folklore of Badakhshan], *Sovetskoe Vostokovedeniye 5,* [Soviet Oriental Studies] (1948): 275-295; I.S. Braginskiy, *Iz Istorii Tadzhikskoy Narodnoy Poezii,* [From the History of Tajik Poetry], Moskva (1956); Amirbek Habibov, "Oid ba Majmua-i Shoiron-i Khalqi-yi Badakhshon " [About the Collections of Folk Poets of Badakhshan], *Sado-yi Sharq* [The Voice of the East], 6 (1955): 145-158; and Nisor Shakarmamadov, ed., *Ruboiyot va Surudho-yi Khalqi-yi Badakhshon* [Rubā'is and Folk Songs from Badakhshan] (Dushanbe: Adib, 1965).

[329] N. Ma'sumī, *Fol'klor-i Tojik: Kurs-i konspektivī baroi ghoibkhonho* [Tajik Folklore: A Course Book for Long-distance Students], (Stalinobod, Nashriyot-i Davlati-i Tojik, 1952), 20.

[330] Rajab Amonov, *Lirika-i Khalqi-i Tojik* [Tajik Folk Lyrics] (Dushanbe: Donish, 1968), 188. See also R. Amonov, *Ejodiyot-i Badeyi-i Khalq va Zamon* [Folk Literary Creative Work and Time] (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1970).

This aspect of variability can be observed in the performance of *qasīda-khonī*, too, with performers singing in different accents, omitting or adding words, etc., deviating from the original text, and thus making the texts their own. The song texts are tied to their performance and become relatively fluid, which allows these variations to appear and acquire meaning relevant to the context in which they are performed. To study the song texts without experiencing them performed might result in a limited understanding. Van den Berg addresses this issue: "When performance and text are separated inevitably an elusive element is lost in studies of oral poetry and each study of oral poetry might be considered as the reflection of a specific moment in an ever-changing tradition."[331]

Due to their oral transmission, compilation, and performance at different moments and by different performers, the text can have various corruptions and distortions as compared to the original written sources. For instance, some song texts are written in the poetic genre of *mukhammas* (a pentastich poem) and known collectively as "*Sifot-i Panj Tan*" [The Characteristics of the Five Bodies], first composed by a local poet of Badakhshan from the 17th century, Shoh Ziyo-yi Shughnonī. The song has acquired a prominent place in the repertoire of many *qasīda-khon*s and has, therefore, been recopied multiple times, resulting in different versions of the same text in possession of different *qasīda-khon*s.

Here, I will focus on three versions of the second stanza of one song text in the repertoire of three *qasīda-khon*s in the Wakhan valley of Badakhshan. It should be noted that the song varies not only in the following lines, but also in the other stanzas too. Mullo Mamadnazarov, a *qasīda-khon* from Shirgin village in the Wakhan, performed the song text with the following words:

Bidon ki ism-i hama koyinot in panjand,
Sutūn-i khona-i in shash jihot in panjand,

[331] Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan,* 39.

Shafe'-i jumla-yi ahl-i najot in panjand,

Qabūl-i hajj-u siyom-u salot in panjand,

Muhammad ast-u Alī, Fotima, Hasan-u Husayn.[332]

Know that the name of the whole universe is these Five,

The pillars of six dimensions of the house are these Five,

The healer of all the saved people in need of salvation is these Five,

The acceptance of hajj, fasting, and prayers is dependent on these Five.

That is Muḥammad,'Alī, Faāima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn.

Safarmamad Safarov, a *qasīda-khon* from the same village, sings the same stanza a bit differently:

Bidon, ki nasl-i hama koinot in panjand,

Sutūn-i khona-i in shash jihot in panjand,

Qabūl-i hajj-u salom-u salot in panjand,

Shafe'-i jumla-yi ahl-i najot in panjand

Muhammad ast-u Alī, Fotima, Hasan-u Husayn.[333]

Know that the progeny of the whole universe is these five,

The pillars of six dimensions of the house are these five,

The acceptance of hajj, greetings and prayers is these five

The healer of all the saved people is these five,

That is Muḥammad,'Alī, Faāima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn.

Van den Berg collected the same song text from Piruzsho, a *qasīda-khon* from Vichkut village. His version is as follows:

Bidon, ki asl-i hamma koinot in panjand,

[332] From the *bayoz* of Mullo Mamadnazarov, recorded in November 2011, Shirgin village.
[333] Safarmamad Safarov, recorded in December 2013, Shirgin village.

Sutūn-i khona-yi shash jihot in panjand,

Qabūl-i hayya ‘alo as-salot in panjand,

Shafi-yi jumla-yi ahl-i najot in panjand.

Muhammad ast-u Alī , Fotima, Hasan-u Husayn.[334]

Know that the origin of the whole universe is these five,

The pillars of the house of six dimensions (i.e., the world) are these five,

The acceptance of the phrase ‘Hasten to Prayer’ comes from these five,

The intercessor of all the people are saved will be these five,[335]

That is Muḥammad,‘Alī, Faāima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn.[336]

As we can observe, the variations appear in different lines of the same stanza in the song texts of the three *qasīda-khon*s. Mullo sings the first line of the second stanza of the song text as, “*Bidon, ki ism-i hama koinot*” [Know that the name of the whole universe], and Safar sings it as, “*Bidon, ki nasl-i hama koinot*” [Know that the progeny of the entire universe], while Piruzsho sings it as, “*Bidon*, *ki asl-i hama koinot*” [Know that the origin of the whole universe].

Another variation appears in the same stanza in the third line of Safar and Piruzsho’s versions, where Safar sings it as, “*Qabūl-i hajj-u salom-u salot*” [The acceptance of hajj, greetings, and prayers]; in Piruzsho’s text it is, “*Qabūl-i hayya ‘al as-salāt*” [The approval of the phrase ‘Hasten to Prayer’]. However, in Mullo’s version, this third line becomes the fourth, and it reads as: “*Qabūl-i hajj-u siyom-u salot*” [The acceptance of hajj, fasting, and the prayer].

Such variations are numerous in the song texts, providing support to the argument that while some versions might have omissions, additions, or changes in various lines and do not precisely correspond to the original texts, they do not lose their social and cultural function or their

[334] Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan,* 650.
[335] The correct translation of this line perhaps would be “The healer of all the saved people in need of salvation is these Five”.
[336] *Ibid,* 279.

significance to the community. To identify an original or "correct" version is difficult. In the evolution of oral poetry such a notion is not valid anyway.[337]

Another source of variation stems from the fact that when transcribing the texts from recordings, many of the words are written down in the Pamirī Tajik dialect which, for example, leaves out the phoneme –h- because the pronunciation of –h- is not present in the dialects, and is often omitted or inserted when it is not necessary[338] or comes other minor deviations from the respective model.

This textual problem was also highlighted by Ivanov concerning the copies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's works preserved in Badakhshan. Ivanov notes that the religious literature of Badakhshan is exclusively in Persian, which is a foreign language to the people because they speak various local dialects. Most people had very little education, and they often misunderstood the texts and re-copied them with errors by "corrections" "sometimes of the wildest kind, which finally upset the reliability of the text."[339] It should be noted that Ivanov, in judging the owner of the texts, totally has misunderstood the gist of oral literature. The concerns of philologists do not touch the "understanding" of a believer. The performers and audience of *qasīda-khonī* reveal that they are neither concerned about knowing the authentic authors of the poetry, nor are they perturbed about the variations in the song texts.

At some point, the existence of various versions made the performers feel that they, to some degree, own the poetry which they sing and record in their *bayoz*. The *qasīda-khon*s produce different versions of the same song according to the occasion, and the receptivity of the audience, depending on the venue of performance. *Qasīda-khons* exercise their talent and creativity to suit the particular performance occasion or context. This can even involve spontaneously composing poems or

[337] Ibid., 39.
[338] Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan*, 248, 304
[339] Nasir-i Khursaw, *Six Chapters or Shish Fasl, also called Rawshana'i-nama,* trans. and ed. W. Ivanow (Leiden: E.J. Brill,, 1949), 3.

utilizing a memorized yet "unusual" song text to fit that particular context. For instance, Azizkhon told me about a moment from Soviet times when religious events were monitored and controlled. While performing at a mourning ceremony, a *qasīda-khon* was informed that a functionary of the state was coming to the house. The performer immediately changed the song he was singing from one devoted to the Prophet Muhammad to one in praise of Lenin. Both texts are provided below:

Ey nūr-i chashm-i odam,
Maqsūd-i khalq-i olam,
Mushkilkusho-yi a'zam,
Yo rahnamo Muhammad.[340]

Oh, eyes light of humankind,
Purpose of the creation of the world,
Greatest problem-solver,
Oh, guide Muḥammad!

Lenin ba mo dildor shud,
Bar kambaghalho yor shud,
Zolim hama jo khor shud,
Lenin barodar rahnamo.[341]

Lenin has become dear to us,
He has become the friend of the poor,
The cruel (class enemy) has become humiliated everywhere,
Comrade Lenin is (our) guide.

[340] Azizkhon Karimov, recorded in November 2011, Tughgoz village.
[341] This poem was composed by the Tajik Soviet poet Saidali Valizoda (1900-1971) in 1922 and was part of literature textbooks. It was very prominent during Soviet time and every member of the community knew it by heart.. For more information about the author and his poetry, see *Ensyklopediya-yi adabiyot va san'at-i tojik* [Encyclopedia of Tajik Literature and Art], Vol. 3 (Dushanbe: Donish, 2004), 417.

Thus for the *qasīda-khonī* texts, their actualization and recreation in and through performance is aided by techniques of delivery and heightened by their social and cultural reception. When *qasīda-khonī* is performed, there is an active interplay between the author of the poems, the performers, and the audiences.

The oral mode of transmission is still prevalent, even though most people are today literate and educated. The Pamirī Ismailis relate more to these texts as performance, and not as literature. For instance, in the performance of *qasīda-khonī*, the songs are collectively referred to as *qasoid*, *qasīda*, *maddo,* or *madhiya* regardless of their actual genre affiliation, be it *ghazal, ruboyī, qasīda,* or something else altogether.

In the following section, I will look more closely at the performance context of the song texts and the role these performances play in society. I will also explore the root of the performances, and in particular the social and cultural experiences which undergird them.

The *qasīda-khonī* performance is a cyclic one where song texts are performed for many hours. During the performance, songs follow suit regardless of which genre of poetry they belong to. Van den Berg discusses five specific genres of poetry performed in the *qasīda-khonī* events: narrative songs (*hikoyat*), *qasīda, mukhammas, munojot* and *dū'o*[342] The performance, however, is not confined to these five genres only. Each cycle of the performance is different, and each *qasīda-khon* has his way to arrange the song texts. For instance, a performance can start with a *munojot* or a *ghazal* and end with *qasīda*s or narrative songs, or it may begin with a *qasīda* or *ghazal* and end with a *munojot*.

[342] Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan,* 214.

As has repeatedly been said, the *qasīda-khon*s are expected to memorize many songs because the long duration of their performance demonstrates their ability and in a way defines their identity. The memorization skills and creativity of the performers are an important tool to give meaning to the song texts, making them dynamic in nature. Mamadyor-i Khujamyor, Mamadali, Akbarsho, Sultonazar, Azizkhon, Zaimkhon and Aqnazar and quite a few other performers in the region today are famous for their vast memory. When during mourning ceremonies Zaimkhon performance in one cycle lasts from 20 to 30 minutes. He performs song texts from memory that may belong to different poetic genres. Throughout a single night he might perform three to four cycles, but in each round he sings different songs: "A *qasīda-khon* should not sing the same song texts in each cycle (*dawr*). It is tiresome (*khastakunanda*) if you keep singing the same song texts every time."[343]

The same song text may yield different meanings depending on the context of the performance. On many occasions, the significance, meaning, and value of the song text comes from its ceremonial function rather than its actual content. A singer may sing for himself alone some songs that serve to evoke the appropriate mental and spiritual state within the performer or at intimate gatherings. Zaimkhon performs one particular *munojot* only early in the morning for his contemplation. Some song texts,which contain eschatological themes can be performed only during mourning ceremonies. These texts serve as both an expression of religious devotion and an aid for the deceased to attain salvation in the hereafter. These texts also call on the listeners to forget their sorrow because they have an Imam who can solve their problems. They should turn to him as an ultimate source of guidance for comfort and consolation. While other texts that mark the significance of certain religious occasions are performed only at particular religious festivals or on specific holidays.

[343] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village.

What is usually understood is that all the song texts which are part of a *qasīda-khonī* performance have religious content. However, some of the *qasīda-khonī* songs might also be performed in non-*qasīda-khonī* performance settings such as at weddings and concerts, where religious content might be only of secondary importance. In these situations, the song texts provide a different impression and meaning. Of course, when the *qasīda-khonī* song texts are performed on religious occasions they tend to yield spiritual meanings. This is true even when the texts are not "religious" in content, as their performance at such an event shapes them as religious. This can also happen the other way round, with song texts with religious content performed in non-religious settings resulting in their losing the religious connotations. Thus it becomes very difficult to categorize texts as "religious" or "secular."

Taxonomy of the Song Texts: Vocabulary, Symbolism, and Genre Convention

A taxonomy of the *qasīda-khonī* song texts may be developed based upon performance contexts and themes. The three main categories of texts mentioned below are not mutually exclusive:

1. Songs associated with mourning ceremonies: Narrative song texts, for example, constitute an essential part of *qasīda-khonī* performance at mourning ceremonies. These type of song texts include historical, religious, and symbolic content, and the texts are usually lengthy and, therefore, performed over a long period. To this category belong song texts such as the *Panj Kishtī* [Five Ships] and *Kalla-yi Pusidasar* [The Rotten Skull].
2. Songs related to Ismailism and its religious festivities: Songs of this category have mostly been written recently by local poets and are generally devoted to the Aga Khan IV, Shah Karim al-Husaini. They are sung only during Pamirī Ismaili religious occasions, including mourning ceremonies.

3. Song texts performed during national holidays: This type of song is devoted to the praise of the country, nature, unity, and peace and is performed mainly in state-sponsored concerts and celebrations.

Each of these categories is described in more detail below.

Song Texts for Mourning Ceremonies

Mourning ceremonies remain a conventional setting for *qasīda-khonī,* which is considered among Pamirī Ismailis an obligatory part of the rituals. *Qasīda-khonī* in this setting usually is not a standardized performance; each performer draws on their resources, temperaments, and capabilities. The texts are mainly devotional and didactical, presenting the mythical deeds of the Imams. The songs are often based on poems by classical Sufī poets. Mainly, narrative, the texts usually convey religious and spiritual messages to the bereaved family and other participants. They instill into them the understanding that death is inevitable and provide them with the means of overcoming their grief. During mourning ceremonies, the song texts serve the social roles, consoling and educating the people. As Koen writes, they "permeate the consciousness with themes of divine and human love, metaphors of spiritual wayfaring, birth, death, and rebirth – a process of transformation and recreation of the self and joyful ecstasy."[344] Their content is associated with the eschatological and religious world view of the people and helps the mourning participants to understand the phenomenon of divine love through the stories.

The texts sung at these ceremonies can appeal to people in two ways: 1) touching people emotionally, allowing them to feel either pleasure or pain; or 2) stirring the minds of the people deeply, causing them to reflect on some aspect of their existence. For example, Lutfiya, who lost her brother at a very young age, said:

[344] Benjamin Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World*, 125.

> *I think listening to* qasoid *is very helpful, especially when you are emotionally in crisis. When I lost my brother, it was a really painful moment in my life. I lost faith in existence. He had so many dreams, but none of them was fulfilled. When I was listening to the* qasoid *during that night, in one way it made me sad, and in another it gave me comfort. I lost my brother but when the* qasīda-khon *sing that* ai odamin-i bekhabar, okhir zī dunyo meravī[345] *, for example, it made me realize that life is not endless. We all die. It makes me feel calm, especially if the singer has a nice voice and plays the* rubob *well. You feel like that your pain is gone.*[346]

The themes of the narrative songs are many and diverse, but most commonly they are concerned with theological and doctrinal issues, yearnings of the soul, as well as ethical principles. These song texts while serving to convey teachings of Ismailism, relating events for Islamic history, and offering praise to God, the Prophet, and the Imams intensify the emotions and reflections of the participants. There are also hagiographic accounts that speak about the great Ismaili Imams, especially Alī and his activities. A central theme is the spiritual role of the Imams in leading the community on the right path. The most important figure in the stories is Alī, who is portrayed in the songs as a solver of all problems.[347] He is an exemplary and charismatic figure, a guardian and savior, and in many of the texts, he is portrayed as a healer of physical loss. Respondents indicate that they learn from the *qasīda-khonī* texts that humankind should behave like Alī, in being generous, kind, courageous, and helpful, and that the songs plant place the love of Alī (*mehr-i Alī*) in their hearts. These texts are appropriate for mourning ceremonies where the atmosphere is mournful, according to Zaimkhon. He sang the following verses to support his argument:

> *Manam darmon-i dard-i dardmandon,*
> *Manam shodirason-i ahl-i zindon.*[348]

I am the one who heals the pain of those who suffer.

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[345] "Oh, unsuspecting human beings, you will leave the world at last".
[346] Lutfiya Mamadrizoeva, interview, April 2012, Ishkahsim.
[347] In the song texts Alī has many names, among the most commonly used are *walī* [favorite of God], *haydar* [lion], *shoh-i mardon* [king of mankind], *shoh-i dīn* [king of the faith], *shoh-i awliyo* [king of the saints], and *soqi-yi ob-i Kawsar* [cupbearer of the elixir of paradise]. See Van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry of the Ismailis in Badakhshan*, 2004.
[348] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, recorded in Novermber 2011, Shirkharv village.

I am the one who brings happiness to those in prison.

By reciting the line above, Zaimkhon advocated his love towards Alī is the one who heals the pain, helps people in need and through singing Zaimkhon expresses his devotion.

Panj Kishtī [The Five Ships]

One of the narrative song texts popular in the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire for funeral ceremonies is *Panj Kishtī* [The Five Ships], written by Forighī, a Badakhshanī poet from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.[349] The "Five Ships" recounts a story of a miracle performed by the first Shi'a Imam, Alī b. Abū Ṭalib. As the story goes, the son of a king in his dreams falls in love with the daughter of the king of China, and on waking up he decides to ask for the hand of the princess. He builds five ships and prepares for the voyage. Once he is at sea, a storm wrecks all the ships and the passengers drown. The king is devastated when he hears about the accident. His vizier consoles him, saying that the King of Men (*Shoh-yi Mardon*) in Mecca, 'Alī can help him. During my fieldwork, Zaimkhon performed this song text for me together with his son Aslamkhon. (An excerpt can be heard on the CD, track number 3.) The following is an excerpt from his version of the "Five Ships:"

Ki odil podshoh-ye būd dar Chīn,
Ba farmonash sarosar Chīn-u Mochīn.
Dar olam mamlakat az bahr-u bar dosht,
Dar olam manfi'at az khushk-u tar dosht.[350]

There was a just king in China,
China and Indochina was under his rule.
His rule included land and sea,
He gained profit from dry and wet.

Ba khobash dīda-vu gardīd oshiq,
Zi joni kheshtan biguzasht oshiq.
Muhayyo kard panj kishtī-ye az ganj,

[349] See the image of the *bayoz* in Appendix K.
[350] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, recorded in November 2011, Shitkharv village.

Ba panjsad kas rawon kardand dar ū ranj.
Ki rūz-e chand dar daryo birondand,
Zawiriqho ba girdobe rasīdand.

He (the prince) saw her (the daughter of the king of China) in his dream and fell in love.
His own life did not mean anything to the lover anymore.
He built five ships from [his] treasury
About five hundred people worked hard (to build it).
They sailed for days on the sea,
The vessels reached a maelstrom.

Ba shoh gufto ki ay sulton-i olam,
Dilat-ro shod gardon-u makhur gham.
Khabar doram, ki dar Makka kase ast.
Ki hall-i mushkilot dar dast-i ū hast.

He said, to the king "King of the World,"
Keep your heart happy, and don't worry.
I know someone in Mecca,
Solving problems is in his hands.

It is a long text, and the story continues and tells how Imam Alī saves the ships and brings the passengers back to life. The "Five Ships" is a prominent song in the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire, and it is important for the Ismailis from a doctrinal point of view as well. By referring to Alī, his generosity, his heroism, and his charismatic deeds, the Pamirī Ismailis assert the centrality of the figure of the Imam of the time, who is identical like Alī in their belief system and validate the legitimacy of his authority. The content of this song text is therefore symbolic and metaphorical.

Zaimkhon noted that "today people won't understand what these five ships mean, what the ocean means. Here we [*qasīda-khons*] and sometimes the *khalīfas* have to explain what they mean. This is how these *qasoid* work."[351] Zaimkhon continued and interpreted the "ocean" as a symbol of the world we live in, where the lover, the son of the king, represents human beings facing problems in their lives. Finally, Imam Alī comes to rescue, which shows that only the Imam could show the

[351] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, Novermber 2011, Shitkharv village.

right path for the salvation of the soul and be one's guide in the difficulties of daily life. The *qasīda-khon*s sing certain lines in the song texts at a higher pitch and repeat them twice to emphasize the significance of these lines. To make the importance of the texts explicit, For instance, while performing the song text, Zaimkhon sang the following stanza multiple times:

> *Tu man dorī chī gham dorī dar olam,*
> *Turo man kay bad-in khorī guzoram.*
> *Yak-o yak pesh-i Shoh-i Din davidand,*
> *Zi khok-i poyash dar dida kashīdand.*[352]
>
> What are you worried about in this world as (long as) you have me!
> When am I going to let you down?!
> Everyone ran towards the King of Religion,
> They took dust from his footsteps and applied on in their eyes.[353]

When I asked why Zaimkhon repeated that particular stanza, he said, "you see, here the *qasoid* tells us that if you have the Imam, you should not worry because he will not leave you in danger or difficulty."[354] To prove underline this, he described the general hard conditions of life, and particularly the famine in Badakhshan during the civil war, and pointed out how at that moment of crisis the present Imam of the Ismailis had provided them with food, medication, and clothes through the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

Narrative Songs Related to the Mystical and Spiritual Life of the Pamirī Ismailis

Narrative songs that include motifs related to the mystical and spiritual life of the Pamirī Ismailis are also part of the repertoire, and their performance brings out their symbolic meaning. For instance, a text by Imam 'Abdussalām (1475-1493), the 33rd Imam of the Ismailis, is very popular among the performers in Badakhshan. It discusses the value of the Imam's supreme guidance for the spiritual quest of his followers:

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[352] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov and Aslamkhon Muborakqadamov, recorded in November 2011, Shitkharv village.
[353] As a symbol of devotion, believers take dust from the footstep of a holy figure or a shrine and apply it on their eyes.
[354] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village. .

Agar farmondehe khohī dar in ofoq-i lohutī,
Ba farmonam kamar bar band, bishnav onchī farmoyam.
Dar in ganjīna-yi nuh saqf chahor ayvon-u shash manzar
Tilism-i ganj-i ma'onī don vujūd-i olam-oroyam…355

If you want to have a guide in this divine horizon,
Then tie your girdle (to follow) my command and listen to what I tell you.
In this nine-roofed treasury, four porches and six perspectives,*356*
Know that me, being that adorn, the world, I am the (talisman of) key to the treasury of hidden meanings.

Azizkhon commented that "Imam 'Abdussalām's poem advises us to aim for spiritual perfection; we should always listen to what the Imam says. The presence of the Imam in our life is like a *nūr* [light] to light our path."[357] According to Azizkhon, this kind of text presents the Imam as a guide without whom the universe ceases to exist. The Imam is considered to be the spiritual center of the world, and the gnosis (of God) can only be achieved through the person of the Imam. Azizkhon continued to sing the same song and re-emphasized the importance of having the Imam in his life. He interpreted the following verse, saying, "if you want to understand and recognize the Imam, your two physical eyes are not enough to see him. You need to open the eyes of *vujūd* [essence] to behold Him."[358]

Agar khohī, ki rū-yi man bubinī, chashm-i sirr biksho,
Ki chashm-i sar nabinad jūz vujūd-i olam-oroyam.
Maro dar olam-i khokī kujo binī ba in dida,
Ki man dar jo-yi bejoyam berun az jo-u mavoyam.[359]

If you want to behold my face, open the eyes of mystery,
As the eyes of the head cannot see my world-adorning existence.
Where in this dusty world can you behold me with these eyes,
As I am in a non – place, out of place and location.

[355] Azizkhon Karimov, recorded in November 2011, Tughgoz village.
[356] "Nine-roofed treasury" refers to the nine layers of the sky, the four porches means the four corners of the world/four points of the compass, and the six appearances means the six sides: right, left, up, down, front, and back.
[357] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village.
[358] Ibid.
[359] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village.

Such song texts are very popular in the community because of their spiritual appeal. There are song texts that are supplications for spiritual enlightenment, vision, and reunion. These types of song texts deal with mystical themes and at the same time convey the tenets of the Ismaili faith to the community.

Ay pisar khez-u virdkun saharī,
To biyobī zi sū-yi haq nazare.
Ay dil-o az dard-i 'ishq bekhabarī,
Rūz-u shab dar havoy-i sīm-u zarī.
Sag ba atlas malik nakhohad shud,
In sukhan gūsh kun agar basharī.[360]

Oh my son, arise and pray in the morning,
So that you grasp the glance of God.
Oh, heart! You do not know the pain of love,
Night and day all you care about is gold and silver.
A dog won't become a king by dressing in satin.
Listen to these words, if you are a (real) human being!

The *qasīda-khon*s emphasize that human beings should not think only about material life, but focus on their spiritual life as well. This plea is presented in the song texts metaphorically since the Ismailis have been notable in Islamic thought for their belief in the *bāṭin,* the esoteric or spiritual aspects of the faith, which complements the *ẓāhir*, the exoteric or external obeyance to the creed. Ismaili literature has always been preoccupied with the spiritual life of the soul, especially its search to transcend the chains of material bondage.[361] The Pamirī Ismailis believe that the ultimate destiny of the soul is to return to its creator. This journey becomes possible through the spiritual relationship that exists between the individual believer and the Imam. This experience is realized and expressed through the performance of *qasīda khonī* during mourning ceremonies, whose texts

[360] From Zaimkhon and his son Aslamkhon's performance, August, 2012, Shitkharv village.
[361] Ali Asani*, Ecstasy and Enlightment: The Ismaili Devotional Literature of South Asia* (London;New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 46.

make explicit that the Imam is believed to be a guide to the esoteric meaning of the faith.[362] This is how Azizkhon commented on the song text included above:

> *Our Imam always calls upon us that we should not forget about our religion and faith (*din-u imon*), and our spiritual world (*olam-i rūhonī*). Some people always think about wealth, and when they are wealthy, they believe they own everything, and they forget about God, the Prophet, the Imam. This* qasoid *tells us that if you dress a dog in satin, it does not become a king. Your wealth does not make you human, but your good deeds do.*[363]

It should be noted that the *qasīda-khon*s interpret many of the texts that include mystical aspects and provide guidance to spiritual progress according to their belief system and they connect it to what their Imam says, even if the texts as such are not in praise of the Ismaili Imams or the prophet of Islam. For instance, Zaimkhon performed a narrative song text dedicated to the prophets, Jesus and Moses, who are greatly respected by the Pamirī Ismailis. The Ismailis believe in the cyclical appearance of six prophets as *nāṭiq*s [spokesmen] who provide religious laws. This phenomenon is not only portrayed in the song texts but is symbolized through the six gut-strings of the *rubob,* which represent the six prophets. More details about the *rubob* will be discussed below in Chapter 5.

The Sulton Jamjama[364] [King Jamjama]

The song text called "*Sulton Jamjama*" [King Jamjama], known among some *qasīda-khon*s in the region as "*Kalla-yi Pusidasar*" [The Rotten Skull] deals with a miracle of the prophet Jesus and is commonly performed during funeral ceremonies. This text addresses eschatological themes and deals with the questioning of the soul as it passes through various stages in the afterlife. The story

[362] For an overview of spirituality among the Ismailis, see Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Ismaili Gnosis*, trans. R. Mannheim and J.W. Morris (London; Boston: Kegan Paul International in association with Islamic Publications Ltd.,1983); and Azim Nanji, "Ismailism," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. S.H. Nasr (New York: Crossroad 1987), 185.
[363] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughoz village.
[364] This text is actually called "Sulton Jumjuma" but the *qasīda-khon*s from whom I collected the information call it "Sulton JamJama". So in this study I refer to it as I have collected it.

recounts the miracle performed by Jesus to resurrect a decayed skull. It narrates that Jesus once saw a skull lying on the bank of a river he was passing, and insects were coming in and out of it. According to the text, the skull had been lying there for centuries. Jesus prayed to God to help him to know whose skull it was and why it was in such a condition. God sent the angel Gabriel, to Jesus and told him to talk to the skull. The skull started to speak, and it told Jesus that his name was the Sultan Jamjama and that he was once a famous and wealthy king of seven lands with thousands of slaves, much treasure, and an army. Then the skull told Jesus about the journey of his death. He was taken to his grave on a wooden donkey and before he was buried two angels questioned him. Since he did not have a religion and did not believe in God, he was placed in hell. The song then continues to describe his life in hell. In the end, Jesus brings him back to life. When he saw Jesus, he fell on his knees and asked forgiveness. After that, he lived for another 60 years, after which he died with *īmon* (belief) and went to paradise. The story ends with a didactic message:

> *Gar tu dorī ʻaql īnro pand gīr*
> *Pand az in behtar naboshad dilpazīr.*
> *Inchunin ast in jahon-u kor-i ū*
> *Hafta-ye chande buvad bozor-i ū*
> *Nogahon bini ki barbandem bor,*
> *Jumla bigzorem in bozor-u kor.*
> *Jumla memonad zi olam meravem,*
> *Hamrohon raftand-u mo ham meravem.*[365]
>
> If you have intellect, take this advice,
> No advice is better than this one would please the heart.
> This is how the world and its matters are:
> Its market runs only a few weeks.
> Suddenly, you will see we pack up our things
> And we leave all this market and its matters.
> Everyone remains, but we leave the world,
> Our friends have gone, and so do we.

This song text is pedagogical, encouraging people to become aware of life's limitedness. When it is sung mourning ceremonies, the *qasīda-khons* create an opportunity for people to understand the

[365] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, recorded in November 2011, Shitkharv village.

significance of life and provides advice to do good deeds, to always follow the path of God, and to not be attached to the material world because after death nothing remains and the only thing that he or she can have at the end is a piece of white shroud (*kafan*). Zaimkhon concluded the narrative song with the following text that delivers the message:

Ey odamin-i bekhabar okhir zi dunyo meravī,
Hojat nadorad sim-u zar okhir zi dunyo meravī.
Gar odamī hushyor shav, khufta mashav bedor shav,
Ghofil mashav darkor shav, okhir zi dunyo meravī…
Gufto Sanoyī īn sukhan az Misr-u Rum to Yaman
Khalq-i jahon pūshand kafan okhir zi dunyo meravī.[366]

Oh, unsuspecting human beings! Be aware that eventually you will leave the world.
There is no need for gold and silver; eventually, you will leave the world.
If you are a human being, beware! Don't sleep! Stay awake!
Don't be naive! Be useful. Eventually, you will leave the world…
Sano-yi said these words, from Egypt and Rome up to Yemen.
The people of the world will wear the shroud. Eventually, you will leave the world.

A Song About Moses

Another narrative song, in the form of *munojot* recounts the story of the prophet Moses. Moses prays to God to be one of the chosen men of God (*khoson-i Khudo*) on the mystical path, and God sends him to a deserted valley to behold one of the chosen men. The prophet Moses witnesses a naked man in the valley, and tries to understand his state of being. Zaimkhon and his son Aslamkhon performed this song on my request, while they usually perform it only during mourning ceremonies.

Shunīdastam ki Muso dar munojot,
Shabe az Haq hame khost-u hojot.
Ey ki ya Rab khoham az fayz-i ilohī,
Ki ba khoson-i darat raham namoī.
Manam Mūso-i payumbar ki hastam,
Khudoro az dil-u jon meparastam.
Nido omad, ki ay Muso safar kun,

[366] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, recorded in November 2011, Shitkharv village.

Birav andar falon vodī guzar kun.
Chu Mūso fahmd kard on amr-i Mutlaq,
Dar on vodī, ki farmon budash az Haq,
Bidid on jo yake marde barahna,
Maro 'aql ast-u ūro hej rah na.
Ba muy-i sar bipechida tanashro,
Ba hasrat dukhta pairohanashro.
Du chashmonash misol-i vahshi ohū,
Az ū owoz meomad, ki Yo Hū.[367]

One night I heard Moses in prayer,
He made a wish unto God one night.
He asked: "Oh my Lord, I wish through Godly grandeur
Thou showest me the path to the chosen one of Thy residence.
I am Moses, and I am a prophet,
I worship God with my heart and my soul."
A call came: Moses set out!
"Travel to this and that valley!"
As Moses grasped that order of the Absolute,
That valley, where God commanded him
He saw a naked man (and he thought)
"I have intelligence of which he lacks."
He had wrapped his body in his hair,
He'd (only), sewn his shirt out of want.
Both his eyes were like those of a wild gazelle,
The (only) sound which came from him was "*Yāhū*."[368]

When we look at the above song texts in a theoretical light, it appears that the figures of the prophets are non-figurative. As Aziz Email writes, "they [the Prophets and Imams] belong to material history less than to a 'poetics' of the sacred."[369] No historical information about the prophets, is provided in the song texts. The texts underline the abstract and spiritual dimensions of the historical and physical prophets[370] and serve purposes beyond the obvious. They function as expressions or symbols of the sacred universe that are present in the collective imagination of the community. They serve as a means through which the community recognizes the presence of the prophets in their lives. In a narrower historical perspective, these song texts serve a socio-psychological

[367] Zaimkhon and Aslamkhon, performed in November 2011, Shitkharv village.
[368] *Yāhū* the outcry of ṣūfīs at *ẓikr*.
[369] Aziz Esmail, *The Poetics of Religious Experience: The Islamic Context* (London: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1998).
[370] Aziz Esmail, *A Scent of Sandalwoods: Indo-Ismaili Religious Lyrics (Ginans)* Vol. 1 (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002), 25.

function in the context of mourning ceremonies in the Pamirs. They enshrine the values and identities cherished by this particular culture.

Khoja daryob ki jon dar tan-i inson adab ast[371]

Another category of song texts that the *qasīda-khon*s perform during mourning ceremonies consists of lyrics of an ethical or moralistic nature, providing instruction towards proper conduct during one's worldly life. The most famous song text exemplifying these motifs is *Khoja daryob ki jon dar tan-i inson adab ast* which was written by Shams-i Tabrezī, the classical Sufi poet.

> *Khoja daryob, ki jon dar tan-i inson adab ast,*
> *Khoja on nūr-i murod-i dil-i mardon adab ast.*
> *Odamizod agar beadab ast, odam nest,*
> *Farq dar bayn-i ban-i odam-u hayvon adab ast.*
> *Yak-dū rūze, ki dar in khona-i tang mehmonī,*
> *Boadab bosh, ki khosiyat-i mehmon adab ast.*
> *Kardem az 'aql savole kī chi boshad imon,*
> *Gūft: maqsud-i Khudovand zi imon adab ast.*
>
> Oh, Master, know that the soul in the body of mankind is *adab*,
> Oh, Master, the light of wish of heart of mankind is *adab*.
> If a man lacks politeness he is not a human being,
> The difference between mankind and animal is *adab*.
> For the one or two days that you are a guest in this narrow house,
> Behave politely, because the virtue of a guest is *adab*.
> We asked the intellect what faith is
> It said: "What God demands from faith is *adab*.

Adab is considered the correct behavior for a person in regard to his or her relationship with God, with his/her surroundings, with him or herself, and with others. In various contexts, the term *adab* refers to external behavior as well as an inner quality of a person. For instance, in the context of mysticism *adab* refers to the way one behaves in relation to God, and in daily life, it relates to the manners of a person and the way he or she acts in society. The term has a comprehensive meaning

[371] ***O Master! Know that*** adab is ***the soul in the body***.

and addresses moral behavior in all domains of life.[372] Through the performance of this song text, the *qasīda-khon*s and the participants realize that in order to understand and experience the presence of God in their life they need to not only perform the rituals, but also must exhibit *adab* in society, and that it is this that constitutes religiosity. Moral virtues are an essential part of the faith (*imon*), and through the song text the *qasīda-khon*s promote the importance of moral virtues in life.

From what I was able to observe and experience, the texts that are sung during mourning ceremonies are not melancholic, but help mourners to cope with unpleasant and unhappy situations in their lives. To make the mourning session a moment of spiritual enlightenment rather than a moment dominated by loss, the participants imagine that the Imams and the prophets protect them from despair. The song texts help them to reflect immediately upon the circumstances of their spiritual and material worlds. This happens through the performance of the song texts in the emotional context of the mourning time, through the aesthetic style of the performers, the beauty of the singer's voice, its vocal expressiveness and movements, the musical setting of the song texts, the interpretation of that text, and the receptivity of the performance by the participants. The people rationalize their spiritual, religious, and communal lives through the singing of song texts and by listening to them.

Texts for Religious Occasions

Many of the *qasīda-khonī* texts are meant for religious rituals and festivals, sung on specific occasions such as the birthdays of the Prophet and the Imam, the Day of the Imamate, during Ramadan, and others. They are mostly poems of recent provenance composed by local poets in Tajik and the local Pamirī languages. Many among them are composed to mark and express

[372] Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

devotion, love, and allegiance to the present Imam, Shah Karim al-Husaini, Aga Khan IV. The *qasīda-khon*s collect these poems in their *bayoz* and perform them most often at occasions related to the recent *didor,* the experience of the Pamirī Ismailis meeting their spiritual leader for the first time in 1995, as detailed in Chapter 1. It should be noted that these new song texts had emerged from the re-Islamization process in the country when people were after the end of Soviet times again allowed to write religious poems and sing them.

Man banda-i Shohparvaram[373]

Many of these poems are included in the repertoire of the *qasīda-khon*s, but the one performed most frequently, and in particular, on the aforementioned religious occasions, is the "*Man banda-i Shohparvaram*." This song text is a recent poem composed by the local poet Anvar-i Andarobī from Ghoron valley of Badakhshan. He escaped the civil war in Dushanbe and took refuge in Khorog, the capital of Badakhshan. He dedicated this poem to the present Imam of the Ismailis, Aga Khan IV.

For example, the "*Man banda-i Shohparvaram*" expresses both the physical (*ẓāhirī*) and the heightened spiritual (*bāṭinī*) emotional experiences of the author in relation to the Imam, when sung by the *qasīda-khon*s reflects the entire community's involvement. The song text metaphorically describes the light of the Imam, which the Pamirī Ismailis believe to be the "light of God," embedded in the Imam and transcended through the chain of Imams descended from Ali. This song devoted to the first time when the current Imam visited his followers in the mountainous region of Badakhshan. The author of the poem makes it explicit that Shohkarim, who is also known as Karim Aga Khan, is the progeny of Haydar (Ali) and the Prophet and he is the "light of God."

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[373] I am a slave (who) feels love for the King

Man banda-yi Shohparvaram, hastam murīdat Shohkarim,
Az bandagon-i Haydaram, hastam murīdat Shohkarim.
Shirīn naboshad zindagī, be shahd-u shirīn bandagī,
Sad shukr az in dorandagī, hastam murīdat Shohkarim.
Ū dastgir-u mo faqir, ikrom-u lutfash benazir,
Az kūdak-u barno-vu pir, hastand murīdat Shohkarim.
Ū khud zi holi Mustafo, az khonadon-i Murtazost,
Ya'ne ki Ū nur-i khudo, hastam murīdat Shohkarim.
Darvoza-yi ilm-i Nabī chun bud Mavlono Alī,
On Shoh-yi Mardon on walī hastam murīdat Shohkarim.
Man Anvar-i Ghoron-i Ū, purjurm-u sargardon-i Ū
Sad jon-i man qurbon-i Ū, hastam murīdat Shohkarim.

I am the servant of the loved King, and I am your *murīd* Shohkarim.
I am the servant of Haydar, and I am your *murīd* Shohkarim.
Life is not sweet without the sweet delicacy of servitude
I am a hundred times grateful for what I have, and I am your *murīd* Shohkarim.
He is benevolent, and we are weak, his grandeur and grace is unprecedented.
Child, young and old, I am [we are] your *murīd* Shohkarim.
He is from the family of Mustafā and Murtaẓā
That is, he is the "light of God" I am your *murīd* Shohkarim.
The knowledge gate of the Prophet, since was Mawlānā Alī,
He is the King of Men, and he is the saint, I am your *murīd* Shohkarim.
I am His Anvar-i Ghoron, full of sins and wanderer,
I sacrifice my hundred lives for Him, and I am your *murīd* Shohkarim.

Talking about these song texts and their performance as part of the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire, Azizkhon said:

> *This qasoid is history (tarikh). No one recalls in the history of our ancestors that the Imam himself comes and visits his* murīd*s. You know many people in previous times took a long journey to visit the darbor [court or residence] of the Imam. This* qasoid *tells us and probably many generations after us that the Imam visited us and blessed us. It is a lesson for our children and great-grandchildren so they must know that the light of the Imamate is always present and is never extinguished.*[374]

The contemporary Imam is implicitly identified with Ali without any apparent need to trace the link historically. All this underlines the *bāṭinī* or spiritual dimension rather than the *ẓāhirī* or physical aspect of the presence of the Imam. Through the song texts, people imagine and comprehend a "reality" which is sacred to them. They realize and understand this reality through

[374] Azizkhon Karimov, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village.

representations that transcend the physical attributes of the Imam. The Imam lives in Europe, far away from the majority of the followers in the towns and villages of the Pamirs. Through song texts such as the one discussed above, the Imam is conceived of spiritually, which creates an imaginary and imaginative world. He lives in the minds and hearts of the Pamirī Ismailis, and that existence is made patent through the performance of the song texts.

Song Texts in Local Languages

Song texts with the same motifs and plot are composed in the local Pamirī languages, which is a new tendency of the local people meant to revive their scriptless languages. At the same time, this changes the traditionally accepted notion that all the texts of *qasīda-khonī* stem from classical Persian poetry and are written and sung in Persian. In the Post-Sovie time, as was mentioned earlier, local poets have began to write poems in their languages.

One of these poets who have recently become active is the *baydguy* [singer] Azizkhon-i Mirbozkhon[375] from Vnukut village of Wakhan. He is a *shogird* of Qurbonsho, a famous Wakhī poet from Vrang village. Azizkhon-i Mirbozkhon has written a range of poems in the Wakhī language. He performs at wedding ceremonies, and for the most part, he performs song texts composed by himself and those of his *ustod* Qurbonsho. Master and disciple are both immensely popular in the community. However, these days Azizkhon-i Mirbozkhon has become interested in singing *qasīda-khonī.* He has introduced change in the performance of *qasīda-khonī* by singing texts written in Wakhī. Today, his and his master's song texts are part of the *qasīda-khonī* repertoire in the Wakhan valley in Badakhshan. The next song text called "*Sho(h) Karīm uz ti bənda*" [Shāh Karīm! I am your servant] is written in the form of a supplication in the Wakhī language and has acquired a prominent place in that community's social and cultural life. I witnessed its performance

[375] Not to be mixed up with Azizkhon Karimov has been mentioned throughout this study.

by Azizkhon-i Mirbozkhon himself during the celebration of the birthday of the Aga Khan on 13 December 2014 in Vnukut village.

Uz yi gənagor bənda,
Uz bənda -yi shərminda,
Zhə nəwakish bifoyda,
Sho(h)karīm uz ti bənda[376].

I am a sinful servant,
I am a shameful servant,
My cries are pointless,
Shāh Karīm, I am your servant.

Uz gənagorī rushəw
Də xhə nərən zhə gəno thəw
Də oqibat mazhi qəw
Sho(h)Karīm uz ti bənda...

I am sinful and disgraced,
With your light burn my sins,
In the afterlife, call me,
Shāh Karīm, I am your follower.

Through this supplication, Azizkhon-i Mirbozkhon emphasizes the authority of the Imam, in particular, in his own life and that of the Ismailis in general, indicating that only the light (*nūr*) of the Imam can save him on the in the afterlife. He considers the Imam to be the savior who has the power to annihilate all the sins committed by Azizkhon-i Mirbozkhon. Many listeners have indicated that although *qasīda-khonī* song texts had been transmitted in Persian, this new song text written in their language is more effective because they have a better understanding of its contents. For the *qasīda-khon*s and their listeners, it conveys more powerfully the importance of love and affection towards the Imam and places his authority above anything else in their life as the emotive principle of existence, allegiance, and devotion.

[376] Azizkhon Mirbozkhon, performed in December 2014, Vnukut village.

Another important aspect of life that the performers express through the new song texts is being away from one's family. The extreme poverty in GBAO that was seen after the collapse of the Soviet Union forced many young people of the region to migrate to different countries, including Russia and Pakistan.[377] Many young people, among them musicians and *qasīda-khon*s, went to work abroad and to remit money to their families. Today almost every household in a village has at least one or two members living abroad who thus contribute to the family income. Being abroad, tolerating the hardships of being in a foreign country, these musicians express their nostalgia and their problems by composing music and song texts.

One of these singers who perform *qasīda-khonī* is Azizbek Khudoyorov, originally from Voznavd village of Rushan district. He learned music from his grandfather, Fayz Jorubov, who played the *ghizhak* (a traditional violin), and his elder brother Farmon-i Khudoyor. His first musical instrument was an accordion that his sister gave him for his tenth birthday. While in school, he participated in many music events and competitions. On finishing school, he served in the Soviet Army for two years, after which he came back and started working in the music theatre in his home district. In 1992 he was admitted to the Institute of Arts in Dushanbe. After he had studied there for two months, civil war erupted in Tajikistan. Due to it, Azizbek did not complete his university studies. The harsh conditions of life forced him to migrate to Russia, where he currently resides. He sings in Tajik as well in his mother tongue of Rushanī. One of the song texts that Azizbek performed during the celebration of the Day of Light in Russia was written by Sardor Rahdor, a famous poet from Rushan district. The poem expresses a longing for his birthplace.

Rikhənjon mu jonat nomat peimon,
Tharom az ta tharom pekhmonat pekhmon.
Tsa rostand lovj khu molkand yi gadoye,
Be (h) az sho(h)ye-vu az takht-i Sulaimon.

[377] Hermann Kreutzmann, "Ethnic Minorities and Marginality in the Pamirian Knot: Survival of Wakhi and Kirghiz in a Harsh Environment and Global Contexts," *The Geographical Journal* 169, No 3 (2003): 215-235; doi: 10.1111 / 1475-4959.00086 (last accessed on September 2015).

Rikhənjon tsa wakht yik bor wunom ta,
Badakhshon ku(h) mathen gulzor wunom ta.
Chibod garthom khu az Maskaw rawazom,
Zimistanade mis ba(h)or wunom ta.
A Mawlo tar bihikht ra(h)mu nanist.
Rikhən az mu firep kho pand qaribom.[378]

Rushan is my soul, my name, and promise,
Away and far away from you, I regret it.
As [it] has been rightly said, a beggar in his land,
It is better than the kingdom and the throne of Sulaymān.
Oh, my sweet Rushan, when can I see you again?
Among the mountains of Badakhshan, I see you as a flowerbed.
I wish I could become a dove and fly from Moscow.
I would view your winter, like spring!
Oh Mawlā, there is no way for me to paradise,
So help me reach Rushan, so I get nearer.

Azizbek sings about the location, its natural beauty, and the waters of his home area. He expresses homesickness, which might seem strange to perform at a religious event. Here, it underlines the argument I have put forward earlier, namely that many meanings of the *qasīda-khonī* texts depend on the general-purpose and atmosphere of the occasion and venue at which they are performed. Depending on the performers' choice of texts and how they connect them to the event, the songs "arise in response to various social obligations which in turn are exploited by poet and narrators for his purposes."[379] It is the performer who is more involved in adjusting and appropriating the song texts to actual social situations, rather than the poet.

In conversation, Azizbek pointed out that he performed this song on that day because all listeners were away from their home, their family. He has been away from his own home for several years now, and he knows what the others, who also migrated to Russia, feel in their hearts. He, therefore, considered it an appropriate time and place to perform this particular song.[380] In the last stanza,

[378] Azizbek Khudoyorov, performed on May 25, 2015 in Moscow during the celebration of the Day of Light by Pāmīrī Ismā'īlī residing in Moscow. His song was recorded by Goibnazarov Muborakqadam in Moscow while attending the performance. I interviewed him through Skype several times.
[379] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 14.
[380] Azizbek Khudoyorov, interview, January 2014, from Dushanbe via Skype.

Azizbek asks the Imam (*Mawlo*), especially on the day when the Imam's first visit to the Pamirs is celebrated for a blessing so he could have a chance to rejoin his homeland, which is his paradise. The *qasīda-khonī* texts are occasional in that they are designated for particular situations such as funerals, celebrations, and other holidays. Along with this, they are often affected by social and political factors as well as the atmosphere or context of the respective actual performance.

Texts Performed on National Holidays

Stage performances of *qasīda-khonī* during national holidays mainly reflect the ongoing social and political changes and convey textual messages supporting the policies of the government, or they might not be related to any of these topics. Although many of the song texts and the national holidays do not align in terms of content, they are interrelated through the process of articulation and performative negotiation. Coded as folklore, the song texts can be regarded as an articulation of the cultural heritage of the country, even if they are not, or not exclusively, about the nation. In this incarnation they work as a homogenized and essentialized form of "national culture." Many of these song texts might be ideology-free in terms of content, for example, being a song about nature or love, but their performance in the context of a political event means they are imbued with specific political agendas. Such is the case of, for example, the following song text, which is regularly performed as part of *qasīda-khonī* during the Day of Unity in Tajikistan on 27 July 2013 in Dushanbe:

> *Agar bar shokh-i gul shinī shavam gulzor-ro banda,*
> *Agar bulbulsifat nolī shavam guftor-ro banda,*
> *Dū zulfash bod payvasta, dū rukh monand-i guldasta,*
> *Dū zulf az noz bishkasta shavam on noz-ro banda...*[381]
>
> If you sit on a rose bough, I'll become the slave of the flowerbeds,
> If you sing like a nightingale, I'll become the slave of your singing,
> The two curls are braided, the two cheeks like a bouquet,

[381].Aqnazar Alowatov, performed in July 2013, Dushanbe.

The two curls are broken by coquetry, and I'll become a slave to that coquetry...

However, unpolitical in nature, with its performance semiotics, such as wearing the national or ethnic costumes, employing particular musical instruments, and the decoration of the stage with the flag of the country and photos of the president, this song becomes a political one. Such is the flexibility of song texts in terms of adaptability in line with ideologically imbued settings.

Other song texts that are sung to mark the independence of Tajikistan are explicitly about love for the country. The *qasīda-khonī* performed by female performers from the GBAO during the national music festival of *Andaleb*, which marked the Independence Day of Tajikistan, once presented a song that was a supplication to God to save the country from danger and bring peace and prosperity to the people. However, when they performed the same song to mark the anniversary of the establishment of the Ismaili Council in Tajikistan, the song text exclusively reflected their religious views, when performed to the melody of *falak,* the fourth section of the *qasīda-khonī* music.

Yo Rab vatanam-ro zi balo dor nigoh,
Az chashm-i hasūd-u nosazo dor nigoh.
In mehr-u muhabbate ki dar kishvar-i most,
Bo nūr-i muhabbat-i Khudo dor nigoh…[382]

Oh, God, protect my motherland from trouble,
Protect it from the evil eye of greed and discord.
This love and affection that is (prevalent) in our country
Protect with the light of the love of God….

Some song texts can be performed both on religious and non-religious occasions. For instance, the following song text was performed to celebrate Nawruz, the spring festival of Iranian New Year, which is celebrated in Tajikistan as a national holiday. This song, written by the Persian poet Ḥāfiz-i Sherāzī, was sung during the celebration in Tusyon village in Shohdara valley:

Ayb-i rindon makun ay zohid-i pokiza sirisht,
Ki gunoh-i dīgaron bar tū nakhohand navisht.

[382] Female group of *qasīda-khons*, performed in August 2011, Dushanbe.

Man agar nekam agar bad birav khudro bosh,
Har kase on daravad, oqibat-i kor ki kisht…[383]

Do not accuse the libertines, oh, ascetic with pure nature
Nobody else's sin will be ascribed to you.
Whether I am good or bad, go and be yourself,
In the end, everyone will reap what they sow...

According to many *qasīda-khons*, this song text can be performed on any occasion because its content does not refer to any specific moments in life and fits the context of almost any performance. During the Nawruz celebrations, this song text was sung to a style of dance music, which is known as *rapo*, to which the audience was dancing with great enthusiasm. Likewise, many song texts can be performed on any occasion, and their meaning depends upon how the *qasīda-khon*s and the participants interpret them on that respective occasion. Another example is provided by the following text, which can be performed at many kinds of event since its meaning can vary along with the occasion:

Boz havo-yi chamanam orzust,
Jilva-yi sarv-u sumanam orzust.
Nakhat-i gul-ro chi kunam ay nasīm,
Buye az on pīrohanam orzust.[384]

Once again I'm longing for the mood of the meadows
I'm longing for my glamour cypress and jasmine.
What can I do with the fragrance of the flower, Oh spring breeze
I'm longing for the scent of that shirt.

When this song is performed during religious festivals or at mourning ceremonies, it is interpreted with a mystical perspective. Zaimkhon believes that in this song text *chaman* "meadow" refers to the realm of the Imam and *sarv-u suman* "cypress and jasmine" to the Imam himself. He thinks that *buy-e az on pīrohan* "the scent of that shirt," means the *barakat* "blessings" of the Imam that every Ismaili is always longing for every day. However, Suhrob Davlatshoev who is a *baydguy*,

[383] Zamir-i Tillozod, performed in March 2013, Tusyon village..
[384] Suhrob Dawlatshoev, performed at a wedding ceremony in November 2012 in Drizh village.

interprets the text differently. He performs it during wedding ceremonies and at other happy occasions and believes that it is a love song and is perfectly suited to being sung during wedding ceremonies: "When I sing it during wedding ceremonies, people like it very much. They dance to this song a lot. Sometimes it happens that people ask me to sing that song several times."[385]

The question then is, how do we differentiate between a text or piece of poetry sung in *qasīda-khonī* and the same text sung as *bayd* or *soz*? This is an arduous task. Although in some cases it seems to fall clearly under one or the other heading, the distinction between the two is not always self-evident. It is the context of their performance, and rarely the text and music itself that determines which category the song as such belongs.

The fact that a text can be performed on different occasions demonstrates that texts can be adapted to various cultural and social moments and can be imbued with varying meanings. Their performance in a particular context defines their social, cultural, or political effects. Therefore, the meanings of a song text are always constructed new and are not fixed forever. They are mobilized and reformulated in various contexts and change along with the ongoing social, cultural, and political changes in Tajikistan. Meanings are also derived from the artificial constructed cultural spaces enforced by state and religious institutions, which also affect the value a performance is attributed. The song texts and their usage are being affected by social and cultural changes, which are often attributed to forces such as modernization, globalization, and institutionalization.

By focusing on the interaction of texts and the contexts in which they are performed, we observe certain aspects of social and cultural transformation and a new kind of contextual understanding of the *qasīda-khonī* texts. We conceive of this relationship between song texts, religion, culture, and politics as a way of social and cultural change that allows for a new understanding of the *qasīda-*

[385] Suhrobi Dawlatsho, interview, November 2012, Drizh village.

khonī practice. *Qasīda-khonī* can be seen as a vehicle that produces and enhances the sense of belonging and commitment to the community, the society, the nation, and religion.

Conclusion

As a socio-cultural phenomenon, the *bayoz* (collection of *qasīda-khonī* texts) is a medium through which the Pamirī Ismailis have across generations articulated their thoughts, opinions, identities, faith, and spirituality, as well as their identitary sentiments. The performative contexts serve as a conversation between many entities, such as the individual, the community, the soul, God, the prophets, and the Imams, as well as the nation. This interactive function is acknowledged through performance, which is an active process of self-sustaining communication and community building (including linking with a national an international community) and which takes place both at the level of musical consumption and production - through active listening, circulation of texts, participation in concerts, festivals, and religious ceremonies.

The texts are also the concrete verbalization of the inner and spiritual yearnings of individuals and the community. They play an important role in the process of supplication and invocation of spiritual forces that transcend mundane realities. They provide people with a way to deal with their passions, solve their problems, and produce or resolve conflicts. They also make philosophical statements about human existence and serve as a means of articulating, dramatizing, and practicing shared ideas and beliefs. Additionally, they provide insight into the cosmic and social origins of human problems and offer pedagogical values in terms of enlightening and educating generations in matters of cultural life.

Further, the *qasīda-khonī* texts today are helping to shape patriotic feelings and the religious consciousness of the Pamirī Ismailīs. The songs are particularly suitable for addressing topical

issues and depicting religious themes, thus serving as a particularly important factor in the ideological [and artistic] education of the broader population.

Transmitted and presented in various forms and performed in multiple contexts, the song texts often reveal different underlying values, behaviors, and identities. While performed in the context of mourning ceremonies, the social and religious values that underlie the songs are foregrounded. When performed in cultural contexts that involve national celebrations, the song texts often take on a political meaning. Their dissemination via CDs and DVDs is another aspect of the interaction between performers and listeners in the modern technological world. People who might not have the chance to participate in an actual performance can now interact, supported by media technology for their private contemplation. This brings *qasīda-khonī* into a more virtual nexus connect with listeners and practitioners.

First as a kind of protest music during the Soviet period, then as a means to cope with personal sorrow and grief in mourning ceremonies and in recent days of hardship and now by promoting solidarity and peace in the international arena, these song texts showcase the power of a living tradition. They thus provide a useful context for studying religion and ethnicity among the Pamirī Ismailis, along with mapping their emotional and intellectual points of reference. The songs link the people to their past, which has given them a sense of religious and cultural identity. The performances are a complex human action, music plus speech connecting large groups of people in a special situation and giving rise to a shared emotional experience.[386]

The significant performative aspects associated with the texts, which have been studied here, reveal how closely the texts are connected to the religious and literary milieu from which they emerged. The adaptive nature of the song texts illustrates the state of the Pamirī Ismailis' adaptive culture as

[386] Compare the findings of Alan Lomax, "Folk Song Style: Musical Style and Social Context," *American Anthropologist*, 61 (1959): 928.

a whole, where various elements from a variety of cultural and historical contexts from the local village cultures to the high Persian and the Soviet Communist are integrated.

Chapter 6: The Music and Musical Instruments of *Qasīda-khonī*

This chapter focuses on the music and musical instruments of *qasīda-khonī* which help express the various identities attached with the tradition. I argue that these identities are interconnected and are expressed through the music, the instruments, and the craftsmanship with which the instruments are manufactured. Added to this are the anecdotes and memories associated with the instruments, which provide further meaning and context to the local musical expression. The meaning and value of music and musical instruments are defined by the interaction between the social and cultural situations in which they occur and the inherent qualities attributed to them by the musicians and their audiences. My analysis focuses on cases in which music and musical instruments bring out religious, cultural, and national identities and help shore up an identitarian defense against dominant political and cultural forces. In this chapter, I will also discuss how the music and musical instruments of *qasīda-khonī* contribute to conformity with social and cultural norms and validate religious and cultural institutions.

The musical culture of the Pamirī Ismailīs is rich and diverse. Music and musical performances play a significant role in the life of the people of the GBAO. Most of the meetings and gatherings in the Pamirs are accompanied by music; rarely, music is not played at such events. Almost every household has at least one musical instrument. The most common instruments of the Pamirs and for *qasīda-khonī* are the *Pamirī rubob* and the *daf*. Nearly all men, starting at ten or twelve years of age, can play the *rubob*. Almost all Pamirī men also play *daf*, and in some parts of the Pamirs for example in Shughnan and Rushan districts, it is also played by women to mark special occasions.

Pamirī Ismailī Identities

As is in the nature of identities, social identities in the GBAO are fluid and subject to change.[387] People in the GBAO utilize various means of identifying themselves based on geographic, political, cultural, or ethnic characteristics, as well as religious ones. These factors lead to the emergence of multiple identities, which are constructed, ascribed, and acquired through political, social, religious, and cultural forces and circumstances. These identities, in turn, are expressed through various expressive art forms, among them music.

The Pamirī Ismaili community consists of a diverse group of people who speak several different languages that are today identified with the common ethnonym "*Pamirī*" by those within and outside the community. In the beginning of 20th century, the Pamirs became the place of interest for the Soviet scholars, and in their studies these scholars categorized people into the larger so-called "title nations" and the use of terms such as "*pamirskiye tadzhiki*" or "*tojikon-i pomīr*" [388] emerged to refer to the people of the Pamirs.[389] However, before the Soviets, people of the Pamirs identified themselves based on their place of birth. As Valetin Bushkov and Lydia Monogarova rightly put " the term "Pamirī" denoted nothing more than the place where a person lived."[390] It was the territorial location with which the Pamirīs defined themselves. For example, people of Wakhan called themselves *Khik* (Wakhī), the people of Shughnan referred to themselves and by others Shughnonī, and similarly the people from Rushan and Bartang were identified as Rushanī and Bartangī. Inherited from the Soviet national and language policies the Pamirīs are now officially considered to be "Tajiks" regardless of the language they speak and other ethnic

[387] Jonah Steinberg, *Ismaili Modern, Globalization and Identity in a Muslim Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).
[388] Aleksei Vasiliev, *Central Asia: Political and Economic Challenges in the Post-Soviet Era* (London: Saqi Books, 2001), 177.
[389] Mikhail S. Andreev, *Tadzhiki Dolini Khuf: Verkhovya Amudaryi* [The Tajiks of Khuf Valley: Upper of the Oxus River Amudarya] (Stalinabad: Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR, 1953).
[390] Valentin Bushkov and Lydia Monogarova, "Ethnic Processes in Gorny Badakhshan," *Central Asia and Caucasus,* 5 (2000); http://www.ca-c.org/journal/2000/journal_eng/eng05_2000/24.bushk.shtml (last accessed November 4, 2013).

characteristics they have [391] the nationality the Pamirīs is seen to be Tajik.[392] Interactions of political force, as well as strong attachment to culture, religion, and geography have played a significant role in shaping the identity of the Pamirī Ismaili community today. Culturally, ethnically, and geographically they consider themselves "*Pamirī,*" and politically and officially they see themselves as Tajiks, with their nationality being registered as Tajik on their passports. *Qasīda-khonī* serves as a site where these different national, ethnic and religious identities continue to be articulated and negotiated.

The Soviet Regime and Local Cultures

The Soviet state policy was not particularly detrimental to local cultures and contributed to the development of differentiated ethnic categories. It also led to the organization, promotion, codification, and popularization of various cultures. Tishkov notes, "despite many crimes committed by the Soviet government against ethnic groups . . . no ethnic groups disappeared from the map of the Soviet Union during the 20th century."[393] Cultures were documented, academically described, standardized and staged in numerous theatres, operas, and museums. Folk music and dance groups were established. During the Soviet period, all forms of artistic expression were heavily edited and curated, so as to conform to the ideological mandate of the Stalin's demand that culture should be "national in form but socialist in content." This resulted in the nurturing of local cultures, especially musical cultures, which I noted in the preceding chapters, afterward in the 1990s served as a basis for nation-building in the nascent Tajik nation-state.

Once independence was thrust upon the Central Asian states with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, cultural and religious expression was fostered to advance nation-building and

[391] Muriel Atkin, "Religious, National, and Other Identities in Central Asia," in *Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change*, ed. Jo-Ann Gross (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 46–72.
[392] Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, (7) (1996): 1105–1129; doi:10.1080/09668139608412402 (last accessed October 4, 2013),.
[393] Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and After the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (London: SAGE, 1997), 234.

(religious) identity-formation. The different new states targeted what during Soviet time had been defined as traditional musical genres, appropriating and absorbing them into their new state-based national cultures, with modifications to accommodate nationalist goals and objectives. Thus, in post-Soviet Central Asia, artistic expression and especially musical performances became central to the expression and development of identities at the national and sub-national levels.

The Music of *Qasīda-khonī*

Spirituality has often been expressed through artistic activity in the Muslim world. Islamic spirituality is delineated in architecture, calligraphy, and music. In fact, it is very much a part of the tradition of Islam to "consider beauty to be a Divine quality and one of God's name is *al-Jamil* (the beautiful) and [it] teaches that God loves beauty."[394] Through such artistic activities, culture and faith are closely intertwined, and it is here that Muslim identities are powerfully imagined and expressed in all their local and global diversity. Art is a part of what makes heritage and culture alive, and not merely as a showpiece but as an integral part of the everyday life of the community.[395]

Q*asīda-khonī* and its music have explicitly been adopted for religious and spiritual purposes.As it has been noted in the preceding chapters, *qasīda-khonī* is a musical performance enacted by individuals or groups of *qasīda-khon*s who recite and sing texts accompanied by musical instruments. As with other musical spiritual traditions elsewhere in the Muslim world,[396] *qasīda-khonī* is firstly a musical performance meant for spiritual, devotional and ritual ceremonies. Religious and "spiritual aesthetic values" are ascribed to the music's sonic features and its performance in ritualized contexts.[397] It usually begins with an instrumental prelude on the *rubob*

[394] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 197.
[395] Hussein Keshani, "Architecture and Community," in *A Companion to Muslim Cultures*, ed. Amyn B. Sajoo (London, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2012), 117.
[396] See Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
[397] Benjamin D. Koen, "The Spiritual Aesthetic in Badakhshani Devotional Music," *The World Music,* 45 (3) (2003): 77-90.

(a stringed instrument), followed by introductory verses sung as a solo in a recitative mode leading to group performance that involves *qasīda-khon*s playing and singing together.

The musical format of *qasīda-khonī* is comprised of five sections.[398] Each section has its interpretation in accordance with the Ismaili belief system. The first section is called *bam*. It is an introductory piece that is played softly and at a slow tempo. It is said to symbolize the beginning of the soul's presence in the human body. *Bam-u zer* or *past-o baland* (lit. up and down), the second section, is played in high and low registers, signifying the process of the soul's return to its origin. *Haydarī*, which is the third section, progresses from a slow tempo to a fast pace. It represents the guidance that comes from the imams, helping Ismaili Muslims attain a level of gnosis (*ma'rifat*). *Falak*, the fourth section, is an instrumental prelude played as a solo on the *rubob.* It is thought to symbolize communication. It is believed that at this stage, communication is established with the angel Gabriel through the medium of a high voice. *Sitoyish*, the last section of the music, helps the soul of a person to reach its final destination, that is, to reunite with God.

Qasīda-khonī Music and Ismailī Religious Identity

The goal of *qasīda-khonī*, as a part of spiritual and religious practices, is to convey religious messages to ordinary believers. The five principle figures – Muḥammad, Fāṭima, 'Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn are woven into religious texts that are sung, carrying a strong spiritual message, and providing a personal encounter with spiritual realities.

Integrating music into the practice of religious life is an important aspect of the Pamirī Ismaili culture. A beautiful voice singing "sacred words" along with the melody of the instruments throws the listeners into a state of ecstasy; they weep, clap, and dance. In this regard, Rouget's observation

[398] In some English scholarly literature, the music is divided into three main sections, and two subsections that are considered to be transitional parts. John Morgen O'Connel, "Sustaining Difference: Theorising Minority Music in Badakhshan" in *Manifold Identities: Studies on Music and Minorities*, eds. Ursula Hemetek, Gerda Lechleitner, Inna Naroditskaya, and Anna Czekanowska (London: Cambridge Scholar Press, 2004), 1-20; and Benjamin D. Koen, "The Spiritual Aesthetic in Badakhshani Devotional Music," 77-90.

is worth quoting, as he emphasizes that "music has the power of inducing trance only because it is a vehicle for words and these words are charged with meaning."[399] The *qasīda-khonī* music and its texts today have become a part of everyday life for the Ismailis in the Pamirs, and they function as a spiritual language that brings people closer to God, the Prophet, the imams, and their present spiritual leader. It is a way that people experience being in the world, a way for them to make sense of that world, to deal with issues related to their being in that world, and to contemplate death. Pamirīs often call *qasīda-khonī* "*zikr-i khudovand*" (remembrance of God); however, it does not resemble the standard practice of *ẓikr* in the Ismaili context because in Ismaili religious practice *ẓikr* is a silent meditation in which individuals call upon the names of God, the Prophet and the Shi'a Ismaili Imams in silence while working the rosary beads.

Listening to *qasīda-khonī* music and songs, for many Pamirī Ismailis, has a purifying, and clarifying effect on the soul, inducing various types of inexpressible visionary experiences. The *qasīda-khonī* experience not only requires listening to the words and the music, but also involves concentrating on the "hidden" meaning of music, texts, and musical instruments. As Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov indicates: "to understand *qasīda-khonī* music the ears of the head (*gūsh-i sar*) are not enough, one needs to open the 'ears of the heart' (*gūsh-i dil*)."[400] For Zaimkhon, for instance, the music that the *rubob*, produces has significant meaning. He notes that we must understand what the sound of the instrument, which is inspired by God and granted a tongue to talk to the listeners tells us, and recited the following verse to support his view:

> *Donī, ki rubob-i mo chiho meguyad?*
> *Az zot-i pok-i Murtazo meguyad.*
> *In pora-yi chūb-i qoq az qudrat-i ū,*
> *Ba kom-i zabonash yo Khudo megūyad.*
>
> Do you know, all the things that our *rubob* says?

[399] Gilbert Rouget, *Music and Trance: A theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 300.
[400] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village in the Wakhan.

It tells us about the pure being of Murtaẓā (‘Alī).
Thanks to His power, this piece of dry wood
Say “Oh God” with its tongue.

The music that the *rubob* produces has a deeper meaning for the *qasīda-khonī* audience as “it is the listeners’ state of mind – or rather the proper ‘tune’ of his soul, which determines both the effect of the music and the content of poetry.”[401] Zaimkhon says that during *qasīda-khonī,* everything one hears should be applied by the listener to his soul and its dealings with God.[402] It is mainly these relations with the transcendent world, i.e. the realm of God, that listeners should be concerned with. It will be relevant in this context to recall Zaimkhon’s interpretation of the music he plays, particularly the five sections of *qasīda-khonī* music. He regards the music as “food for the soul,” similar to what the Sufis consider *samā* to be: “food for the spirit” which strengthens the heart and one’s inner nature.[403]

Zaimkhon expresses the essence of this music as primarily a religious experience, an experience that is constructed musically. This religious experience that in some way construct his identity is articulated through the interaction of the individual performer with the spiritual world, as well as through the act of participating in communal gatherings at religious occasions where this music is performed. The five sections of the music are not always played in sequence and also one cycle of the performance not often includes all five sections described above. The entire sequence of five sections is performed only on the first night after a funeral, the “wakeful night,” which has been discussed in previous chapters. In other contexts, the duration of the music is shorter. It depends on the individual *qasīda-khon* and the section of the music he chooses to play, based on the setting and context of the performance. For instance, Zaimkhon and his son Aslamkhon performed *qasīda-*

[401] Leonard Lewisohn, “The Sacred Music of Islam: Sama’ in the Persian Sufi Tradition,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology,* Vol. 6 (1997): 18.
[402] Zaimkhon, interview, November 2011, Wakhan.
[403] Jawad Nurbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism I: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*, trans. L. Lewisohn (London: KNP, 1984), 189.

khonī in their house after the evening prayer on a Friday night in November 2011, and it did not include all the sections described above. It started with *bam-u zer* and then proceeded to *falak*, followed by *sitoyish* and *haydarī*, and ended with another *falak*. Not following the standard or traditional sequencing, however, does not diminish its spiritual or religious significance. The meaning of this music is bound to the performance of the music, and not simply to the music itself.

The performers' conceptualization of their music is not universalist. They provide different interpretations and various terminologies for each section of the music. In some cases, they are familiar with the music they play but do not engage in any significant reflection on the names and sections of the *qasīda-khonī* music. Only those *qasīda-khon*s who have mastered the tradition of their respective *ustod*s, are able to reflect on the significance and meaning of the music. For example, one *qasīda-khon* explained the sections of the music with names that had no religious meaning attached. Mullomamad, a *qasīda-khon* from Shirgin village, noted that the first section of the music is called *torchīnī* (picking strings), the second is called *duzarba* (two beats), the third *rapo* (footsteps) or *rawoni* [volubility], the fourth section is *falak*, and the last part is referred to as *chapzarb* (left beats). Mullomamad provided merely a musical perspective of the sections, but did not mention any religious connotations. When asked if these sections hold any spiritual meaning, he declined to comment.

Its place in the ideology of Ismailism in the Pamirs, *qasīda-khonī* is meant to evoke mystical and religious emotions among listeners. The five components of the music characterize this function. For instance, the spiritual effects of the music result from a rhythmic framework, strong stress pattern, the volume and quality of the voice, group reinforcement, and continuous presentation of the verbal text. In order to emphasize the religious message the performers repeat the particular melody or repeat a refrain. The meaning, rhythm, and modulation of in conjunction with the musical instruments deepen the effect on the listeners and intensifies their emotional state of being

connected. The esoteric meaning of the *qasīda-khonī* music and songs is only recognized in their performance at religious ceremonies. At secular musical events these meanings are not visible, even though similar music is performed.

Impact of *Qasīda-khonī* Music on Audience Members

Marambek is a musician and a singer but not a *qasīda-khon*; he contrasts the music and songs of *qasīda-khonī* with the music he performs: "The music and songs of *qasīda-khonī* are religious (*dīnī*). They have a profound meaning. All the songs are about the Prophet, the Imams. People who understand it, are uplifted by it and get 'drunk' (*mast*), especially when listening to the songs about the miracles of the prophets and the Imams performed by a group of *qasīda-khons.*"[404] Marambek recalled a moment when he participated in a *qasīda-khonī* performance at a funeral ceremony where a man was so uplifted by the music that he began to dance. People then stopped him, since to dance to the funerary music of *qasida-khonī* is customarily considered inappropriate. Indeed, it is a taboo to dance during mourning ceremonies in many parts of the GBAO, except for Bartang valley.

The significance of the music and the songs is imbued with ritual value, and therefore, charged with sacred meaning. In recent years, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have developed a focus on the "ethics of listening and its effect on the human sensorium and revival movement within contemporary Islam."[405]The *qasīda-khonī* sacred meaning of the music influences the normative behavior of listeners and performers alike, sparks religious knowledge and helps a group identity crystallize.

[404] Maramek, interview, November 2011, Tughgoz village in the Wakhan.
[405] Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscapes: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 67.

It should be noted that the religious significance of the music depends on the state of mind of the listeners. For instance, during mourning ceremonies the family of the deceased person is overwhelmed with feelings of grief and anxiety; while listening to the music and songs, they start weeping and crying. By making them cry the music helps them relieve their pain. During many such occasions, the close relatives of the deceased person are in a state of shock and unable to cry, which harms them physically and psychically. *Qasīda-khonī* music and songs therefore not only have religious importance but also exert a healing, cathartic effect on the listeners.[406] During happy occasions such as cultural festivals, the listeners and participants get enthused by the *qasīda-khonī* music, which brings them to clap and dance openly. Once again, this is because of the melody of the *qasīda-khonī* songs but also due to the unleashing of emotions due to the aural experience.

The effect of music is not internal to itself. It comes from the performance context. Whether this music is seen as religious or secular, or even whether it is considered "proper" music at all results from the context of the performance. The music identity, as Spinetti writes, "relies strongly on indexical semiotic processes which are articulated by regional musical icons and their associations with the places, the experience of communal social life and the idiosyncratic aesthetics, which are constitutive of perceived regional cultural authenticities."[407]

In discussing their *qasīda-khonī* experiences, listeners express a variety of emotions and experiences. The experience of *qasīda-khonī* music really "depends on the individual's intention and attention"[408] which can even transform the listener's original state. One of my women respondents, Nurjahon, admitted that "even though sometimes I do not understand the content of the songs I still feel relaxed by the music. It gives me comfort. It helps me to recall the precious

[406] Benjamin Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World*.
[407] Federico Spinetti, "Open Borders: Tradition and Tajik Popular Music: Questions of Aesthetics, Identity and Political Economy," *Ethnomusicology Forum,* 14 (2) (2005): 202.
[408] Benjamin Koen, *Beyond the Room of the World*, 47.

moments that I had in my life."[409] She then described how, in her youth, her father would play the *rubob* in the evenings. She wished she had a brother who could continue the tradition of her father playing the *rubob*. She said that she sent her elder son to a musical school, hoping he would follow in the footsteps of his grandfather. From the example of this woman, we can surmise that the primary effect of *qasīda-khonī* is to give listeners a feeling of security. For Nurjahan, it symbolizes her early life and her spiritual experience and offers a device for memory retrieval. It acts as a tool for the process of constructing who one is and facilitates to stabilize or change collective and individual feelings, perceptions, cognition, identities, and the perception of difficult situations.[410]

On some occasions, *qasīda-khonī* might not bring about positive emotions, but it still marks the experience of moments of transformation. A young informant, Nazira, described her first experience of listening to the *qasīda-khonī* music at mourning ceremonies and highlighted that for her, *qasīda-khonī* always reminded her of mourning ceremonies, and, therefore, she did not like listening to it. This example shows that individual interpretations of the musical event of *qasīda-khonī* may vary significantly from one another. One could see the *qasīda-khonī* music also as a means to attain desired states of mind, such as relaxation and peace but also undesired ones, such as feeling of loss and grief. It is also vehicle individuals may use to counter difficult states of being, such as sorrow as in case of Lutfiya mentioned earlier when she lost her brother.

The Pamirī *Rubob*

Musical instruments, apart from being recognized and attractive to individuals because of their sound, shape, and aura, have become symbols of tradition and identity for nations, sub-national regions, and ethnic groups. They have specific cultural meanings, and these meanings are related "to a web of local cultural relations which position them in local musical tradition."[411] They are

[409] Nurjahon, interview, August 2011, Dushanbe.
[410] Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 20.
[411] Kevin Dawe, "The Cultural Study of Musical Instruments" in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*,

not only physical objects, but are meaningful by the cultural value they assume at a given moment in place and time. As Appadurai argues in another context, "we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things."[412]

The Pamirī *rubob*, or sometimes is called *rubobcha*, plays a significant role in the religious and cultural lives of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims. The Pamirī *rubob* is a wooden, short-necked lute with six gut or nylon strings. It bears similarities with the Tibetan and Nepalese lutes and belongs to a series of high-mountain lute types seen across a particular mountainous musical region.[413] The instrument comes in various sizes and shapes, but is typically about two and a half feet long and is made from the wood of an apricot, mulberry, or walnut tree. Its circular soundboard, referred to as the "head," is covered with thick leather fastened with iron nails. Several ornamental holes are drilled into the sound chamber to facilitate sound production. The *rubob* is played with a wedge-shaped wooden plectrum (*zakhmak*), tied to the instrument with a string. A piece of wood located on the instrument's head, called the *kharak* (little donkey), acts as a bridge and is used for tuning the instrument, along with six pegs (*gushak*). The sixth peg is placed in the middle of the instrument's neck.

When is the Rubob Played?

The *rubob* is played at various occasions by the Pamirī Ismailī Muslims, but mostly during of *qasīda-khonī.* During the Soviet rule of the GBAO, the *rubob* and its function underwent a

eds. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 277.
[412] Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5.
[413] Mark Slobin, *Music in the Culture of Northern Afghanistan* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), 122. See also the image of the *rubob* in Appendix L.

profound change and decline. At that time, anything closely associated with religion was banned and suppressed. Since the instrument was essential to a religious ceremony, the *rubob* never gained entry to the musical schools, colleges, or institutes. It was a musical instrument played only secretly in the family circle. In the middle of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, the *rubob* began to be played outside ritual contexts and was included in official cultural events as part of the Soviet time reconstructed orchestra of folk instruments.[414] Following the collapse of the Soviet state, the *rubob* re-emerged, and modified versions of the instrument were produced. Though still fashioned in the old form and retaining aspects of the traditional playing techniques, the instrument makers now apply different religious and nationalist decorative patterns on the instruments.

In its basic form, each part of the instrument is ascribed a sacred meaning metaphorically assigned to the physical and spiritual worlds. Thus acquires the special instrument status in the cultural, and religious schemes. Through its function in the music culture and its place in the social and cultural life of the Pamirī Ismailis, the instrument expresses various identities of and to the people.

Music and Musical Instruments in Islam

The way the Pamirī *rubob* expresses the religious identity of its makers, players, and listeners should be discussed as part of the broader discussion of music and musical instruments in the Islamic context. It should also be discussed in relation to the stories and legends connected to the production of the instrument, the decorations on the instruments, and its utilization in religious practices.

[414] The first Pamiri Children's Ensemble participated in the Decade of Tajik Art, in Moscow, on April 22, 1941, as a national ensemble from Tajikistan SSR. I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniya* (Selected Works), vol. 18. Tver: Informatsionno-Izdatel'skiy Tsentr "Soyuz" (2006), 211-212.

There is debate as to whether listening to music and taking part in musical activities is permitted for Muslims. Many Muslim scholars and power holders condemn music and musical performances regarding them as a deviation from God's command, similar to drinking wine and gambling. Some other Muslim thinkers provide evidence for the utility of music and musical instruments in religious practices.[415] For instance, during the Prophet Muhammad's time, women, girls, and slaves are said to have used frame drums to pay their respect upon the arrival of eminent people, and frame drums were also played during battles to encourage the warriors towards victory.[416] The various debates on such issues indicate that Islam, as a world religion spread to many different regions throughout history and encountered many different cultures and civilizations, was articulated through diverse practices wherever it took root. It also created various forms of identity expression through the variations in devotional practices within Muslim societies.

In the Central Asian context, such movements resulted in the creation of values and identities to which traders, rulers, and preachers (especially the Sufīs) contributed immensely.[417] The Pamir region was not exempt from this process of Islamization. Music and musical instruments became an integral part of the new culture. In many parts of the Muslim world, particularly in Persianate cultures, "music is considered a spiritual food."[418] Many musical instruments are used during religious occasions which came to be venerated and seen as having symbolic significance. For instance, the large tambourine (*daf*),[419] is considered to refer to the cycle of all created beings

[415] A. Gribetz, "The Sama Controversy: Sufis versus legalists," *Studia Islamica 1* XXIV (1991): 43-62; Amnon Shiloah, "Music and Religion in Islam," *Acta Musicologica* 69, Fasc.2 (1997): 43-55; and Amnon Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-cultural study* (England: Scholar Press, 1995).
[416] Veronica Doubleday, "The Frame Drum in the Middle East," *Ethnomusicology,* 43: 1 (1999): 109. See also, George H. Farmer, *A History of Arabian Music* (London: Luzak, 1929).
[417] For a case study on the Islamization of Central Asia, see Devin A. DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). He discusses the issue of Ozbeg's (a Mongol ruler) conversion to Islam on the basis of local conversion narratives.
[418] John Baily, *Music of Afghanistan: Professional Musicians in the City of Heart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 152-155.
[419] See the image of *daf* in Appendix M.

(*dā'ra akwān*)";[420] the reed-flute (*nay*)[421] is associated with the Mevlevi ritual,[422] and the *tanbur* is a musical instrument played in the sacred music repertoire of the Kurdish Ahl-i Haqq.[423] The interpretation of "cycle of created beings" is given to in the practice of *qasīda-khonī* in which the *daf* as a circular drum, is believed to symbolize the universe and the *rubob* as the soul entering the universe, i.e. when the soul comes into being.[424]

The Pamirī *rubob,* with its distinctive features, plays an essential role in the religious life of the Pamirī Ismailī Muslims. The spiritual reference of the instrument can be observed in its physical form, the inscriptions and decorations on the instrument, and its use in religious ceremonies. Mention must also be made of the oral history prevalent among the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims concerning the origin of the *rubob*. This has allowed for the integration of *rubob* performances into traditional Muslim devotional practices. Today, each household in the GBAO possesses a *rubob*, even if no member of the family plays the instrument. They keep the instrument hanging on the wall, passed from one generation to the other, as a marker of religious and ethnic identity.

Origin Stories of the Pamirī Rubob

The history of the Pamirī *rubob* is unclear; no known written historical sources provide information about the instrument's evolution. One must, therefore, rely on oral accounts by the musicians and instrument makers, which include ambiguous legends and stories, some of which are even available in the region in written form. The most common legend associates the invention of the *rubob* with Nāṣir-i Khusraw (1004-1088). The legend says that when he traveled to Jurm in Afghan

[420] Leonard Lewishohn, "The Sacred Music of Islam: Sama' in Persian Sufi Tradition" *British Journal of Ethnomusicology,* Vol. 6 (1997): 13.
[421] R.A. Nicholson, *Rumi: Poet and Mystic* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1978), 29.
[422] Veronica Doubleday, "The Frame Drum in the Middle East: Women, Musical Instruments and Power," *Ethnomusicology,* 43: 1 (1999): 104.
[423] Partow Hooshmandrad, "Performing the Belief: Sacred Musical Practice of the Kurdish Ahli-i Haqq," PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2004.
[424] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Shitkharv village, Wakhan.

Badakhshan, a king called Malik Jahonshoh lived in Barak, on the opposite bank of the river, whose sister had been ill for a long time. Nāṣir cured her but then rumors spread of her having become pregnant, which angered the king so that he ordered that the healer be pursued. When the king's men attempted to cross the bridge to reach him, the bridge turned upside down, and the king, his horse, and his people turned to stone. Nāṣir-i Khusraw turned them back to human form, thus performing yet another miracle. Only then did the king realize that he had made a mistake and he promised to serve Nāṣir-i Khusraw for the rest of his life. The king was ordered to create a *rubob* from the saddle of his horse and was asked to sing.[425] This story exists in a slightly different version in a small book, *Bahr al-Akhbor* edited and published in 1992 in Khorog.[426]

In addition to the story above, there is another legend that was narrated to me by Kholmamad, a *qasīda-khon,* and a *rubob* maker from Shughnan. I met him in Khorog at the De Pamiri Handicraft (an organization that works with handicraftsmen in GBAO) office where he was selling *rubob*s. He believes that the *rubob* was first created at the same time as God created the first human being.

> *The history of the* rubob *goes back to the first human being,* Odam-i Safiulloh *[Adam]. When Allah created the first human body from clay, the angel Jabrail [Gabriel], was sent to earth to place the soul inside the body. However, the soul did not want to enter the body as it was scared to go inside a small narrow space. Then all the angels were asked to make a* rubob *and play it. As soon as the soul heard the sound of the* rubob*, it got excited and went inside the body. However, before entering the body, God told the soul that if it did not want to stay inside permanently, it could come out. When the soul entered the body, it liked being inside the body and decided not to leave it. Jabrail was asked to remind the soul that he had promised God to stay there temporarily. The angels played the* rubob *again, and the soul departed from the body. Therefore, human beings do not live forever. Our soul came to this world with the sound of the* rubob, *and it should be accompanied to its origin by the* rubob, *too.*[427]

[425] Yormamadov Abdulmamad, Azizkhon Karimov, and Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interviewed October and November, 2011 in the Wakhan. The same story was told in: Gabriele van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2004); and Faizulla Karomatov and Nizam Nurdjanov, *Muzykalnoe Iskusstvo Pamira* [Musical Arts of the Pamirs], vol. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1985).
[426] R. Rahmonqulov, ed., *Bahr al-Akhbor* (Khorog: Pamir Press, 1991).
[427] Kholmamad Kholmamadov, interview, November 2011, Khorog.

Many scholars are frustrated by these legends and question their historical reliability.[428] However, these legends are passed on orally even today and their popularity, as Devin DeWessee emphasizes, "serve[s] not as a source for history per se, but for religious values in general" and "the significance of conversion and its meaning for communal identity."[429] Their place within their historical context helps us to "reveal the essentially sacred act of 'founding' a community and defining it in fundamentally religious terms."[430]

Ethnographic accounts of Pamirī musical culture from the 20th century also provide us with some interesting stories from the region that assert the importance of the *rubob* in the Pamirī Ismailī culture. Nurjanov offers the following description, which is similar to the narrative of Kholmamad: "Gabriel cut a stick from the tree, made a *rubob* and then covered the head of the *rubob* with the skin of a horse, made strings from the intestines of sheep and played the music. Then the soul gets excited from the music and comes down from the mountains and enters the body of the human being."[431]

Rubob and the Expression of Religious Identity

Today the *rubob*, as a musical instrument, serves as a means through which the religious identity of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslim is expressed. The existence of such conversion stories, offers insight into the importance of the *rubob* in the life of the Pamirī Ismailis, in particular in that it acts as a medium between human beings and the spiritual world. These stories show how the instrument is embedded in the everyday life of the Ismailis and integrated into Ismaili devotional practice.

[428] Andrey Bertel's, *Nasiri Khosrov i Ismailism* (Moscow: Vostonchnaya Literatura, 1959); and Wladimir Ivanow, *Problems in Nasir-i Khusraw's Biography* (Bombay: Ismaili Society, 1956).
[429] Devin A. DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde*, 12.
[430] Ibid., 6.
[431] Faizulla Karomatov and Nizam Nurdjanov, *Muzykal'noye Iskusstvo Pamira* [Musical Arts of the Pamirs], 13.

It is not only the origin stories about the *rubob* that suggest this association with the religious identity of the people. Another way of expressing their identity through the instrument is the devotion shown by people towards the instrument and the way it affects and transforms the state of their being while the instrument is being played. For instance, many Pamirī Ismailis believe that the soul and the *rubob* are connected since the beginning of them (*az rūz-i azal*). Because of this eschatological reference, they play this instrument during mourning ceremonies. Today, people who participate in funeral ceremonies also confirm that during that moment of sorrow, the sound of the *rubob* is very soothing. As mentioned earlier, Lutfiya informed me that the sound of the *rubob* had a consoling affect on her when she lost her brother at a very young age. She emphasized that during the funeral of her brother, the only thing that soothed her pain was the sound of the *rubob*. "It somehow penetrates your soul, and it makes you feel calm and relaxed," she said.[432]

The *rubob*'s sacrality can also be noted in the way people take care of it. The instrument is always kept in elevated places in the Pamirī house and is not usually put on the ground. In case it is put on the ground, it is always placed upright. People talk about the *rubob* with great enthusiasm because they consider it an instrument that preserved their faith for a millennium. In this regard, as a symbol of their religion and religious identity, it was presented to the Aga Khan IV as a gift in 1995, when he visited the Pamirs for the first time. A young *qasīda-khon* from the Shohdara valley studying at Khorog University explained the event in these words:

> *The* rubob *is the instrument that our forefathers played to praise the Prophet, and the Imams. It is an instrument that bears our history, our culture, and tradition. It is an instrument that taught us our religion, protected our faith from disappearance, and delivered it to us. It is an instrument that connects our past and our present. When our Imam visited us for the first time, we gave him a* rubob *as a gift. We gifted the* rubob *to our Imam because we did not see the Imam until 1995, but we always had a spiritual connection with him through the* rubob.[433]

[432] Lutfiya Mamadsafoeva, interview, October 2011, Ishkashim district.
[433] Asratsho Malbekov, interview, October 2011, Khorog.

We can see here that the *rubob* acts as a means of expressing devotion and connection of the Pamirī Ismailīs to their Imam and their faith. They treat the instrument with respect and care. Usually, when one asks musicians in the Pamirs why the *rubob* has a special status in the community, they answer the question by reciting the verse,which Zaimkhon recited and we discussed them earlier on page 204 above. They also sing the religious significance of the *rubob* during *qasīda-khonī* performances. For example, in the following verses sung in the Shughnī language by a singer called Shirinbek, in the *falak* melody, the religious meaning of each string of the *rubob* is metaphorically expressed, projecting the religious identity of the singer:

Nəghəghed dam rabob yet chiz sukhan kekht
Qarib ved yet rawon jon az badan kekht.
Yi porcha-yi zor az qudrat-i Haq
Khuthoy luvd-at imom turd luvd yet beshak
Nəghəgh yet bezevath turd luvd analhaq
Nəghəghed dam rabob yet chiz sukhan kikht

Ei musulmonon nəghəghed yet chize turd luvd.
Sukhan az panj tan (h)ar pinz zil luvd
Shashum zingak ta turd az Jabrail luvd.
Nəghəghed dam rabob yet chiz sukhan kikht

Yakum zil az Muhammad kixt rivoyat
Duyum luvd az Ali sha(h)-i viloyat
Sayum kixt naql az khotun-i jannat
Nəghəghed dam rabob yet chiz sukhan kikht

Di chorum zil neghegh yet chiz nawo kikht
(h)ikoyat az Husain-i Karbalo kikht
Hasan yod panjumin zil bekhato kikht
Nəghəghed dam rabob yet chiz sukhan kikht

Listen to what the *rubob* says!
It accompanies the departed soul.
This piece of wood through the power of God;
Only talks about God and the Imams.
Listen! Without a tongue it says *anā -l-Ḥaqq*.
Listen to what the *rubob* says!

O Muslims! Listen to what it says to you!
All five strings talk about the five bodies.
The sixth string, *zingak*, talks about Gabriel.

Listen to what the *rubob* says!

The first string recounts about Muhammad,
The second is about King Ali, who is dear to God;
The third talks about the Lady of Paradise.
Listen to what the *rubob* says!

Listen to what the forth string says!
It tells the story about Ḥusayn of Karbalā
Without a doubt, the fifth string talks about Ḥasan.
Listen to what the *rubob* says!

The verses reveal that the performers and the listeners see the *rubob* as strongly connected to the symbols and stories of their faith. They express their religious identity through this instrument. Although each string of the instrument has a musical name – *bam*, *mukholif*, *zīr*, *rawonī, sanjaq* and *zingak* concerning their association with the religious belief system of the Pamirīs, these strings also have religious names and meanings. Each string of the instrument has been metaphorically assigned to the Five Bodies (*panj tan*) and the angel Gabriel.

The *rubob* makers convey their devotion and religious sentiments via poems, singing them, and carving religious verses on the body of the instruments to legitimize their argument. The instrument makers prop up the notion of identity through their specific choice of texts, materials, designs, inscriptions, and decorations. On this point, Nicholas Thomas says, "objects are not what they were made to be but what they have become."[434] By utilizing the *rubob* in various religious contexts, communities have ascribed meaning to it; the musical instrument has thus been transformed into an item through which identity is constructed and expressed.

The Physical Construction of the Rubob

Making a *rubob* is a long and painstaking process that demands that the maker have considerable knowledge and skills. Abdulmamad Yormamadov, a *rubob* maker from the Wakhan, locally known

[434] Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 4.

as *usto* (master of woodwork), recounted that in the past, making a *rubob* was a ritual process in itself.[435] To set out for his work, the master performed ablution and prayer (*namoz*), sacrificed a sheep and prepared a meal from the sacrificed animal, locally known as *khudoyī*, which was shared with others. The guts of the sheep were reserved for preparing the strings for the future instrument. After the *khudoyī*, the skin used for the head of the *rubob* was soaked in water for 5–10 days to facilitate removing the fleece before it was stretched out over the instrument's soundboard. A tree had been felled, and a part of it considered suitable for the future instrument was cut and then left to soak in water for 10–15 days in order to prevent the wood from cracking.[436] *Rubob* makers use hardwoods such as apricot and mulberry, for making the instrument last longer. One can still find intact *rubob*s in Pamirī houses that are more than a hundred years old. For instance, one *balandmaqom* (a unique type of *rubob* in the Wakhan valley of the GBAO), made by Sufi Muborak-i Wakhonī, is estimated to be about 200 years old. The instrument still functions very well and is in possession of Lutfullo, a great-grandson of Muborak-i Wakhonī.

Today, the ritual process of making the *rubob* differs from the past as construction methods have changed. The ritual formerly practiced with the construction of the *rubob* is no longer performed, and the gut strings of the instrument have been replaced with nylon strings. According to Abdulmamad, the non-observance of the ritual does not undermine the instrument's significance. The classification of stringed instruments into "instruments of hell" (metal-stringed instruments) and "instruments of paradise" (gut-stringed instruments)[437] no longer applies. The nylon strings that replaced gut strings sound reasonably good. They are more readily available and practical and

[435] See the photo of Abdulmamad Yormamadov in Appendix N.
[436] Abdulmamad Yormamadov, interview, October 18, 2011, Langar village.
[437] On this classification, see Faizulla Karomatov and Nizam Nurdjanov, *Muzykal'noe Iskusstvo Pamira* [Musical Arts of the Pamirs], 12–13.

are faster to obtain than gut strings. As Abdulmamad remarked, "some of our work has become easier, but that does not affect the nature of the *rubob* as a sacred (*muqaddas*) instrument."[438]

The *rubob* makers decorate the instruments with various motifs. The patterns carved or inscribed on the instruments illustrate the way people construct and express their identities. The decoration on the *rubob* can be made of one motif or several that cover the entire instrument. These motifs are believed to represent natural and spiritual aspects of life. There are manifold interpretations of the decorations on the instruments.[439] For instance, Masayn Masaynov produces different forms of *rubob* with symbolic designs and depictions. Inscriptions in Arabic or Tajik written in Cyrillic, such as *Bi-smi-llāhi r-Raḥmāni r- Raḥīm*, *Yā 'Alī Madad*, and *Yā 'Alī* illustrate the way the instrument makers express their identity as Muslims and particularly their identity as an Ismaili Muslim.

The particular shape and construction of the *rubob* also articulates its sacredness. This is done by associating anthropomorphism and zoomorphism with the instrument, e.g. with the nomenclature of the instrument's components associated with human body parts, such as the head, neck, belly, and ears,[440] or with legends and stories that are built around the creation of the instruments, associated with angels and the miracles of saints.

The shape of the *rubob* is often compared with the human body, and its six strings, which along with the specific Ismailī symbolism of the *Panj Tan* and Allāh are thought to represent the six prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. The sixth string which represents the Prophet Muhammad ends midway along the instrument's neck, or fingerboard, signifying the

[438] Abdulmamad Yormamadov, interview, October 18, 2011, Langar village, Wakhan.
[439] Benjamin D. Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World*, 80-82; Benjamin D. Koen, "Medical Ethnomusicology in the Pamir Mountains: Music and Prayer in Healing," *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 49:2 (2005): 287-311.
[440] Margaret ,Kartomi, "On Metaphor and analogy in the concepts and classification of musical instruments," *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 37 (2005): 25-57.

seal of prophethood and the beginning of the Imamate in Ismaili Islam. The zoomorphic representation is depicted by shaping the instruments into the form of totemic animals.[441] In some cases, the Pamirī Ismailīs associate the *rubob* with images of totemic animals and birds – the horse or the hoopoe (*hud-hud*). Folklore exists in many cultures that illustrate the wide range of symbolism and attributes of the hoopoe,[442] which in Muslim cultures and Persian poetic culture, in particular, is associated with devotion and virtue.[443] The shape of the horse symbolizes *Duldul*, the horse of the Prophet Muḥammad or Imam Alī. There are many stories in which a horse is converted into a supernatural and mythical being. According to Islamic belief, Gabriel brought such a supernatural and mythical being *Burāq* from the heavens and the Prophet rode it on the Night of Ascension (*Shab-i Meroj*).[444] This association articulates the sacredness of the instruments.

Furthermore, it is not only the shape of the *rubob* that is associated with the horse of the Prophet; the *rapo* or *rawonī* section of the music of *qasīda-khonī* is believed to represent the same phenomenon. The word *rapo* is a combination of the Tajik/Persian words *rah* meaning step, road and *po* meaning foot. Thus, it means a footstep or the movement of feet. Musically, *rapo* is a melody meant for dancing, in which foot movement is important. Therefore, in the Pamirs one of the dances is known as the *raqs-i rapo* (the *rapo* dance). In *qasīda-khonī*, *rapo* music is believed to resemble the sound of a cantering horse and symbolically refers to *Duldul*, the horse of Alī. Zaimkhon mentioned that the *rapo,* or *rawonī*, section of the music is also called *duldulsawor*, meaning "the riding on Duldul."[445]

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[441] Jean–Sebastien Laurently, "Anthropomorphism, zoomorphism and abstraction in the musical instruments of Central Africa," in *Sounding forms: African Musical Instruments*, ed. M.T. Brincard (New York: The American Federation of Arts, n.a.), 46-51.
[442] See Sheldon Oberman, *The Wisdom Bird: A Tale of Solomon and Sheba* (N.a.: Boyds Mill Press, 2000).
[443] Nancy Hatch Dupree, "An Interpretation of the Role of the Hoopoe in Afghan Folklore and Magic," *Folklore*, 85, 3 (1974): 173.
[444] Tayebe Jafary and Morteza Hashemi, "Analyzing the Prophet Muhammad's Symbolic Horse in His Spiritual Ascension," *Asian Culture and History,* 5:1(2013): 74-78. See also Khalid Sindawi, "The Donkey of the Prophet in Shī'ite Tradition," *Al Masāq*, 18:1 (2006): 87-98, doi: 10.1080/09503110500222278.
[445] Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, interview, November 2011, Wakhan.

Changes occurred in the *rubob*'s design soon after the visit of the Aga Khan to the Pamirs. Instrument makers began to express their religious identity through utilizing different religious-institutional patterns, such as the logo of the Institute of Ismaili Studies and AKF, which is the hand of five, a symbol representing the *Panj Tan*. In this way, the artists and craftsmen attempt to adapt their traditions to modern forms and to integrate into the institutionalized form of their religion, establishing a connection with the global Ismaili community.[446]

A distinctive type of *rubob* is the *balandmaqom*, literally, 'high stage.' It is a nineteen-stringed lute that was devised by a Sufi poet, astronomer, and musician from the Wakhan, Muborak Wakhonī (d. 1903). The nineteen strings of the *balandmaqom* denote the Arabic letters in the phrase "*Bi-smi-llāhi r-Raḥmāni r- Raḥīm*".[447] The original *balandmaqom* is still preserved in the house of Muborak's great-grandson, Lutfulloh Zaraboev, in Yamg village in the Wakhan. This musical instrument,today represents not only the inheritance of a particular person, a family, or an ethnic group, but also manifests the cultural heritage of the whole Tajik nation, as many copies of it exist in a museum dedicated to the memory of Muborak-i Wakhonī's birthplace that function as cultural institutions under the Ministry of Culture in Tajikistan.

The illustrations on the instruments can be understood not only as aesthetic items that are the product of skilled craftsmanship, but as cultural artifacts that hold symbolic meanings, represent the identity of the community, taste, and fashion; and evoke feelings of connection to religion, place, and people. The religious and social identities of the masters, players, and music consumers are integrated into the production of the *rubob* and the consumption of its music. It provides us

[446] See the image of the *rubob* with the logo of AKF in the Appendix O.

[447] See the image of *balandmaqom* in Appendix P.

with a rich and complex model for studying the ways in which the *rubob* fits into, and even shapes, a particular cultural world.

The Pamirī Rubob's Expression of Cultural and National Identity

"Nation" and "national identity" are both socially constituted and exist as political and cultural inventions to serve ideological purposes.[448] Upon gaining independence, official Tajikistan found itself in a position to rally its people towards the exercise of nation-building and felt the need to construct a unitary national identity. Various forms of cultural expression have been instrumental in creating that identity. However, there is a tendency among different groups within the nation to lack appreciation or devalue the cultural diversity of the country. These people seek to impose their views on cultural values, which often are stereotypical. They continuously question and contest the notion of national identity. Focusing on the distinguishing features of their language, religious affiliation, geographical location, and cultural values, these groups advocate cultural differentiation and even political separation. Such a negotiation is an ongoing process and is subject to change. Strands of culture come to occupy dominant and prominent facets of national identity through such negotiation. These strands are visible in cultural representations of the *rubob* that are affected by political and cultural changes and are clearly articulated in the perception, utilization, and construction of the physical instrument.

The *rubob* is now valued, not only as a religious musical instrument in an ethnic community but also as an important expression of cultural heritage as part the national culture through different cultural programs. Through its commodification and exhibition for instance, at *Andaleb* festival, the instrument signifies national values and introduces the musical, artistic and creatives aspects of culture of the Pamirīs and the Tajik nation to the international arena as an embodiment of national

[448] James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture, Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

values. Young people are now learning to play the instrument at cultural venues and music educational institutions. Performers are invited to play on national television programs and at art festivals. The instrument's sacrality has been transformed, and it is now received as a cultural product that not only represents the culture of a particular ethnic group, but articulates the cultural diversity of Tajikistan, and internationally, of Muslim cultures in general.

The *rubob* makers, as noted above, produce the *rubob* not only for ritual purposes, but also for employment by cultural institutions, for tourism, concerts, and promotion of the arts. Within this process, they establish a proper perspective for viewing their religion and culture through this instrument by combining the past with the present and religion with culture, and to negotiate their identity within competing cultural and political domains. A process of transferring vernacular cultures into globality is going on, by turning a traditional musical instrument into a piece of art.

Today, the master craftsmen use different shapes and forms to adapt the old *rubob* to the tastes and interests of the market and cultural institutions. *Rubob*s are currently more decorated and include more patterns and icons that represent the national symbols of Tajikistan, such as the emblem and the flag.[449] Not only the form and shape of the instrument, but also the way it is played during performances illustrates a new understanding of identity. The *rubob* players sit on chairs on the concert stage, in contrast with the performers who play the instrument during religious settings, where they must sit on the ground.

Modified versions of the *rubob* have been assimilated into official cultural life. In 1941, the first orchestra of Tajik folk music was established and performed in Moscow.[450] The creation of such an ensemble entailed both reconstructing traditional Pamirī musical instruments for orchestral

[449] See images in the Appendix Q.
[450] I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniya* (The Essays), 211-212.

performances and adapting the traditional performance culture of "Tajik" music to the new social venue of concert halls.

During the Soviet period of modernization, the state organizations encouraged local craftsmen to produce their goods and supported them economically. Such state official promotion of folk culture, showcasing "traditional" Tajik culture and spirituality, contributes to its visibility in the public international domain until today. Organizations like De-Pamiri Handicraft and the Aga Khan Music Initiative promote, develop, and revitalize musical culture in the region, including the craft of *rubob* making. It is not only the state and the NGOs who introduce change but also the "traditionalists" have their kind of modernization — applying nylon instead of gut strings, decorating the body of the instrument with new patterns and embellishing materials. Today, the instrument has been revitalized and reintroduced into mainstream performances. It is featured frequently at concerts, festivals, and folk music performances.

Arriving at a sense of a shared sense of identity, based in common social practices, can be achieved through musical instruments.[451] The Tajik national identity can be expressed, first, through the contribution of the master craftsmen by the carving nationalistic images on the body of the instruments. Secondly, the instruments project that identity symbolically, through their physical display at cultural festivals, cultural programs, and the mass media. The *rubob* is not just an instrument for music, but also an instrument for expressing the identities attached to that music.

The *Daf*

Although, in this chapter I have focused mostly on the *rubob*, other musical instruments also play significant roles in expressing Pamirī Ismaili Muslim identity. One of these is the *daf*. The *daf* is a circular framed percussion instrument which comes in different sizes and construction patters, with

[451] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2nd edition, 1991), 3.

or without jingles. In the GBAO, the instrument is played in various musical genres by both men and women. Women play *daf* in the Shugnan and Rushan regions for welcoming and sending off brides, and grooms Men play the *daf* when performing a musical genre called *dafsoz* in wedding ceremonies. It is also played in some parts of the GBAO to announce the death of a member of the community. Thus, the performance of the *daf* in the GBAO is categorized as *daf-i shodī* [‘*daf* of happiness or joy’] and *daf-i gham* [‘*daf* of sorrow’]. [452]

The use of the *daf* in *qasīda-khonī* performances is in the Wakhan limited as compared to its use in Shughnan and Rushan districts. In the Wakhan, the *daf* is associated with joyful occasions and, therefore, is not played during the performance of *qasīda-khonī* at mourning ceremonies. If a death occurs in a village where a wedding is about to take place, a member of the family who wishes to celebrate the wedding, together with the village leader, visits the bereaved family to ask for their permission to proceed with the celebration and play music at the wedding. During the meeting they invite relatives of the deceased to play the *daf*. [453] This custom of seeking permission has a dual role; it shows the visitors’ respect for the family’s sorrow, while at the same time helping them to break their mourning. The family’s acceptance of the invitation to play the *daf* signifies their consent to the wedding arrangements and the performance of music. In this context, musical instruments “serve as an area of shared experience,”[454] and help to express and promote communal identity, social interaction, and solidarity.

Gender and Musical Instruments

The gendering of musical instruments is common to many cultures. It is typically women, rather men, who are restricted from playing musical instruments in Muslim societies, and in certain cases, even from seeing particular instruments. For example, in the Pamirs, the *rubob* is by convention

[452] Gabrielle van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains,* 38.
[453] Alipano Yaqubekov, interview, October 17, 2011, Shirgin of the Wakhan.
[454] John Baily, “Recent Changes in the Dutar of heart,” *Asian Music,* Vol.8, No.1, (1976): 55.

played only by men. This prejudice weakened, however, during the Soviet period of modernization, when women were encouraged to learn all types of musical instruments. This was a part of the social legacy of the Soviet Union's attempt to integrate women into economic, social, and artistic life, which brought an entire generation of talented female singers, dancers, and instrumentalists into the public domain. As a heritage of the Soviet Union's effort female *rubob* players today perform at various national cultural festivals, as described in the previous chapters.

Conclusion

When Tajikistan gained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, religious and national consciousness became crucial to the life of the people. The political and socio-economic changes then led to the realization and articulation of various identities among the people. These forces of change contributed to the construction of such identities, which were then expressed in cultural ways. Through the playing and making of instruments, the masters and the musicians play a role in constructing and shoring up regional and national identities. This tendency emerged as a broader cultural development towards modernization, based on changes in cultural values, aspirations, and notions of identity. This widespread resurgence of interest in their culture and practices has driven the *rubob* makers and musicians to restore traditional instruments by opening workshops in which to make and repair the instruments, by training students, and by producing musical souvenirs with depictions of different cultural and national patterns on the bodies of the instruments. The *rubob* has become a touristic product for consumption. National symbols, such as the national flag, the emblem of Tajikistan, are carved on the instruments. Religious, ethnic, and national expressions are blended on their bodies and presented in a way that manifests the complex, multiple, and interconnected identities of the region. The result of these processes of representation, differentiation, and commodification is the reconfiguration of local and global identities, which has been the theme of this study.

The custom of *rubob* making and playing in the Pamirs had been handed down from generation to generation. Its study, its reception, and the community's respect for it as a sacred Pamirī instrument are important for understanding the culture of the region. The instrument also conveys the life stories of its makers and the musicians and transmits this knowledge to the future generation. The reintroduction and revitalization of the Pamirī *rubob* can be witnessed through cultural programs, such as music festivals and exhibitions, and national events, such as Independence Day (*Rūz-i Istiqloliyat*), the Day of Union (*Vahdat-i Millī*), Nawruz, and so forth. The purpose of these programs is manifold, but one function is common to all: to raise awareness of the composers and instrument makers along with promoting their contribution to the musical national culture.

The underlying themes discussed in this chapter show a relay between the transmission and transition of interconnected identities of the musicians, instrument craftsmen, and the Pamirī Ismailī community. The *rubob* and *qasīda-khonī* music have played and are continuing to play an integrative function in articulating and elaborating ethnic, religious, musical, and national identities.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study has focused on the religious phenomenon of *qasīda-khonī* as practiced among the Pamirī Ismailīs in the GBAO. I have explored the role of *qasīda-khonī* in everyday life of the Pamirī Ismailī Muslims and highlighted the different aspects of the performance and its significance within religious, socio-cultural, and political contexts. The performance is viewed, understood, and expressed variably by individuals who are economically, ethnically, geographically and ideologically differentiated. Unlike the view expressed by some scholars, that *qasīda-khonī* is solely a religious music performance,[455] and my research has shown that the creation and consumption of its performance has spilled over from the spiritual realm.

I have shown how the performance of *qasīda-khonī* has adjusted to the new religious, socio-cultural, and political situations and transformations taking place in Tajikistan today. Through the data collected in the field, I have demonstrated that *qasīda-khonī* has come to represent a complex intermingling of spiritual practice, ethical models and historical memory, evolving from its medieval Islamic origins while also becoming a tool for cultural and political expression in the globalized world.

Above all, my study is a recognition of *qasīda-khonī*, a centuries-old religious and spiritual practice rooted in tradition but not limited by it, embedded in the sense of place and yet forging a global connection. It is a widespread practice that continues to influence many Ismaili Muslims (and non-Ismaili Muslims too) today, both in a religious sense and outside of it.

[455] Benjamin D. Koen, *Beyond the Roof of the World: Music, Prayer and Healing in the Pamir Mountains* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Gabrielle van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study of the Songs and Poems of the Ismaili's of Tajik Badakhshan* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2006); and Haidarmamad Tavakkalov, *Traditsiyii ispolneniye Madhiya v Badakhshane* [The Tradition of *Madhiya* and Its Performance in Badakhshan], PhD. Dissertation, Academy of Science, Dushanbe: Donish, 2006.

This study draws on insights from the work of ethnomusicologists, performance theorists, feminists, anthropologists, symbolic and interpretive anthropologists, scholars of religious studies, and scholars of literature in general.

I have shown how *qasīda-khonī*, as a religious musical performance, can be used as a site for understanding the popular religion of the people, and also as a means through which Pamirī Ismailis publicly express their subjective experiences and their interpretation of their own culture. My research challenges the view that *qasīda-khonī* is an unchanged religious practice by showing the relationship of religion, culture, and politics *in process* and revealing the movement of this spiritual practice within the domains of culture and politics. I have demonstrated the social and cultural transformations that have shaped the experience of Pamirī Ismailis, and how these great shifts have been both accepted and challenged, expanding their understandings of culture based on notions of citizenship, cultural identity and diversity. I have focused on the position of the performers. The traditional idea that *qasīda-khonī* is a male performance genre has been challenged. Its use in varying contexts has created spaces for women to participate in it actively.

This study contributes to the ongoing debate discussed in the introduction, that music is unlawful in Islam, by demonstrating that music is part of the everyday life of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims, serving as a means of worship and remembrance of God. For these people, the religious aspect of their lives is inseparable from the non-religious part of their lives.

I have discussed the relationship between the *qasīda-khonī* performance, its song texts, religion, culture, and politics as a social and cultural process that are producing understandings of identities. By performing the song texts in various contexts, such as on national and international stages, the peoples' sense of belonging and their commitment to the community and nation are being strengthened. The performance of *qasīda-khonī* justifies their desire to express their religious, cultural, and political devotion. The meaning and interpretation of the song texts reveal how these

song texts took shape and have contributed to constructing the Pamirī Ismailī religious world view. Using the song texts as a reference point, Pamirī Ismailis talk about their religion as reflecting both an individual and communal religious world view and experience. Discussing the song texts in the cultural domain, I have argued that *qasīda-khonī* is a means of creating a relationship or connection between local religious practices and national and global religious and cultural practices. It allows us to understand that through the action of many players or agencies knowledge about the self, community, and culture is understood and maintained. These interrelations are realized through processes of articulation and negotiation in different contexts. For example, the performance of *qasīda-khonī* during political and cultural celebrations articulates the cultural heritage of the Tajik nation and *qasīda-khonī* comes to be treated as a form of national culture.

These articulations are the result of the processes of institutionalization and globalization and the way these processes have accelerated the distribution of culture to more and more sites and audiences. Through the process of institutionalization by religious, cultural, and political organizations, *qasīda-khonī* has moved into broader cultural and political spaces. It is intertwined with religious and socio-cultural and political structures. As I had discussed in Chapter 1, when new religious and political institutions were established in post-Soviet Tajikistan, the cultural changes were not always welcomed since the attempt by insider and outsider religious and state institutions to dominate local cultures led to contestation and resistance.

I discussed *qasīda-khonī* in its various performative contexts in Chapter 3 and indicated that the value, meaning, and interpretation of the performance are crucially dependent upon the context of the event and the audience's expectations. I attempted to understand and articulate the different identities that exist and their interconnections through performative contexts. As a multivalent performance, *qasīda-khonī* incorporates layers of meanings that are recognized and valued differently in varied contexts. I have included information about the values, beliefs, perceptions,

and circumstances that inform the actions of the Pamirī Ismailis, their attitudes, their world views, and their understanding of their everyday lives. Concerning the evolving contexts, *qasīda-khonī* encompasses certain beliefs about religion, culture, and politics and enables the crystallization of these beliefs. I noted that many aspects of the tradition had been retained in present-day performances in most contexts, while some elements have evolved or changed which leads to contestation. Nevertheless, the so-called traditional and non-traditional performances co-exist.

I have highlighted the various practices of *qasīda-khonī* in Tajikistan and the various ways in which *qasīda-khonī* is understood and performed in different geographical areas. To take one form of the genre as representative for all other forms of Pamirī musical culture would be ethnographically a mistake. Therefore, I have shown that musical performance is not static, that each performance can be different in terms of performers, contexts, and gender norms and others. Within the practice of *qasīda-khonī*, I have shown that there are different expressions of identity which the Pamirī Ismailīi community. These numerous identities are interconnected but often interpreted and defined in relation to occasion and context. I have attempted to show that a distinct identity is not permanent and it is always negotiated in different cultural contexts in order to satisfy differing aspirations.

Pamirī Ismaili and Tajik identities are multifaceted, based as they are on language and other forms of differentiating ethnic features, religious or confessional identity, and the identity of belonging to the Tajik nation. These days, in the domain of national identity, the socio-cultural identity plays a crucial role in projecting a unified front. This identity is not anymore a category of specific ethnic groups as the Soviets constructed, but rather a larger phenomenon within that encompasses the whole society and nation. The sub-ethnic loyalty of the Pamirī Ismailis expands into national patriotism, and localism transforms into nationalism and thus appears in the form of national self-consciousness. Some songs of *qasīda-khonī* project characteristic elements of national patriotism, as was the case for the female performance during the *Andaleb* musical festival. The performers

expressed their love for the motherland, formed by a collective or common standardized or institutionalized forms of cultural event that paves a way to self-identification in response to changes in the social and cultural realities of the region. The state with its legal and constitutional paradigms thus becomes a consolidating factor, The national sentiments that some Pamirī Ismailis express through their performance of *qasīda-khonī* reflects that they value the "center," i.e. the state. So, in many cases, in musical cultural terms, the national cultural phenomenon becomes more dominant than the religious aspect of the music.

The performance of *qasīda-khonī* within religious institutions, such as its performance at the Ismaili Center of Dushanbe, was intended to share a common understanding of cultural aspects of the Pamirī Ismailis. In relation to this, we have observed a transition from one cultural system to another, where traditional cultural components are so intertwined with religious elements that it becomes difficult to differentiate the spiritual aspect from the aesthetic. Through an examination of the performance of *qasīda-khonī,* I have demonstrated how the identity in Pamirī Ismailī communities is constructed through musical performance. By making their music public, the Pamirī Ismailī reach a larger audience than was previously possible. Traditionally, the performance was viewed as a religious practice performed only for religious occasions in non-public settings. The collected data discussed in this study demonstrates that the musical culture expressed in the Pamirs today retains some aspects of the tradition, and at the same time, that artists are developing the music and producing a new form of it that is reaching the wider world. Through the example of various performances in contemporary Tajikistan I have revealed the processes of cultural construction that are shaping national debates on identity and public life.

By looking at the *qasīda-khonī* performance, I have attempted to point out the complexity of what constitutes the Pamirī Ismailī culture in which music, religion, ethnicity, and political activities play constitutive roles. This study does not attempt to establish or construct one particular

perception or idea that represents the total reality of the Pamirī Ismailī culture or the position of *qasīda-khonī* within it. Instead it explores the complex nature of both entities. Nevertheless, I do not deny the dominant forces behind the evolution of Pamirī culture, but my interest lies in illustrating how the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims express themselves within often conflicting situations and norms through their practice of *qasīda-khonī*, and thus chart a common trajectory through the changing religious, socio-cultural, and political milieus.

The central argument of this study is that there are specific socio-cultural processes and contexts (exemplified in *qasīda-khonī*) within which the multiple identities of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims are contested, constructed, and expressed. Social dimensions such as ethnicity, religious ideology, and political ideology influence the practice and play a significant role in the organization, construction, and expression of the Pamirī Ismaili Muslims' cultural realities and identities. I argue that *qasīda-khonī*, and music in general, becomes a framework through which one can understand the intersection of the multiple identities and the way people understand each other and reflect on their socio-cultural practices.

I have shown that *qasīda-khonī* is a musical practice that crosses social, religious, cultural, and political fault lines, and is assimilable within various contexts. It does not fit within bounded categories. It presents the diversity of interpretations of how one should live and perceive and negotiate one's world. As one's environment changes, so do the meanings attached to the way one relates to that environment. I have attempted to mark the transformations, to point to the changes that are continually being expressed in the Pamirī Ismaili society as its members navigate their lives in a continuously changing world. As we have seen, some of them perceive these changes as opposing their social and cultural norms, guided by their religious beliefs, while others see them as inevitable or even welcome developments. They all seem to agree that these transformations do exist and must be contended with.

I have attempted to explain *qasīda-khonī* as a fluid musical performance, always changing and transforming in relation to its contexts, and this shapes the world views and identities of the Pamirī Ismailis. The *qasīda-khonī* performance has evolved to be performed in multiple contexts, which has resulted in contestations over the meaning, value, and essence of the performance and its words, music, and instrumentation. The reproduction of the texts of *qasīda-khonī* songs and performances, while expanding the audience pool, has also contributed to the diversification of the performance format. I also explored how expressive culture, through the example of *qasīda-khonī,* comes to reflect social transformations while supporting the idea that expressive culture is itself always in flux and undergoing change.

This study has shown that Pamirī Ismailis retain an interest in their customary music, and have a broad outlook in terms of music-aesthetic world view. It has also demonstrated that they value the ethnocultural aspects that emerged with the independence of Tajikistan. At that particular moment, their music becomes an essential part of the quest for a collective Tajik cultural and national identity. This can be seen in the movements of the *qasīda-khons*, the circulation of the song texts, and the dissemination of recordings through physical (notebooks, CDs, and DVDs) and non-physical (television, internet, and radio) media. I have attempted to understand how *qasīda-khonī* circulates and conveys meanings that in turn help contribute to building the identities, religious beliefs, sense of belonging, and national sentiments of the Pamirī Ismailis. I also examined how *qasīda-khonī,* as a conjunction of music and religion plays a role in the standardization or diversification of the performance and the music; creates multiple belongings; articulates religious meaning and commitment, nationality, and ethnicity; and fulfills the desire to belong to various imagined communities at the same time.

This study explores the dynamics of the *qasīda-khonī* performance, its delocalization, the relocation of its performance, and how it has become disentangled from its "original" or

"traditional" context, which resulted in it being performed and circulated in new and newer contexts. It discussed how *qasīda-khonī* and its practitioners contribute to the propagation of religious ideas, multiple identities, and cultural practices; how the rhythms of *qasīda-khonī* facilitate the building of interconnected identities and networks; and the extent to which delocalization and relocation lead to the formation of new belongings.

Appendices

Appendix A: A Pamirī house

Figure 3: Pamirī House, photograph Donish Doniyorov, Tusyon, GBAO, 2012.

Appendix B: A female performance

Figure 4: Female performance of *qasida-khonī* at the National Festival "Andaleb," photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, Dushanbe, 2014.

Appendix C: Male performance

Figure 5: Azizkhon Karimov (first from the left) during a *qasida-khonī* performance with his disciples, Tughgoz Village, Wakhan, GBAO, photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, August 2014.

Appendix D: Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov

Figure 6: Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, a *qasida-khon* from Shitkharv Village, Wakhan, GBAO, photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, July 2013.

Appendix E: The Pamir Ensemble performing

Figure 7: *Qasida-khonī* performance of the Pamir Ensemble at the Ismailī Center Dushanbe, Dushanbe, photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, August 2011.

Appendix F: *Qasida-khonī* performance celebrating Imamate Day

Figure 8: Performance of *qasida-khonī* during the celebration of Imamate Day in Langar Village, Wakhan, photograph Vatani Alidodov, July 2011.

Appendix G: Sohiba Dawlatshoeva dancing during the performance of *qasida-khonī*

Figure 9: Sohiba Dawlatshoeva dances during the performance of *qasida-khonī*, at the Académie Diplomatique Internationale in France, photograph Kirill Kuzmin, 2015.

Appendix H: The Pamir Ensemble in Moscow in 1941

Figure 10: Pamir Ensemble in Moscow, 1941, photo from the archive of Gurminj Museum, Dushanbe, August 2013.

Appendix I: Part of the *Bayoz* of Mullo Mamadnazarov

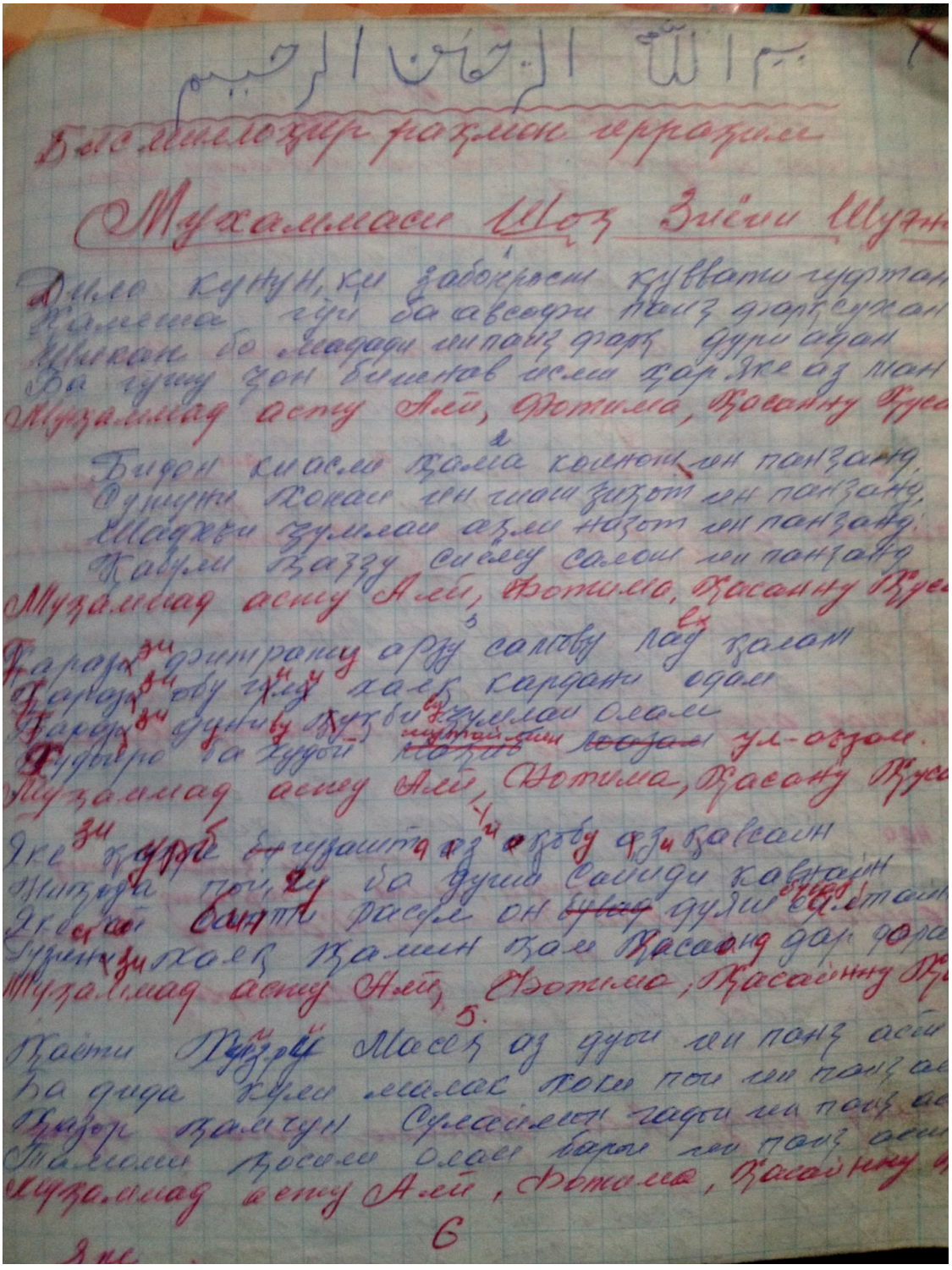

Figure 11: *Bayoz* belongs to *qasida-khon* Mullo Mamadnazarov, Shirgin, Wakhan, photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, November 2011.

Appendix J: CD cover of *Bayoz* of a *qasida-khonī*

Figure 12: *Bayoz* of *qasida-khonī* on CD, published by Panjsher Recording Studio in Khorog, GBAO, 2007. Photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, November 2011.

Appendix K: Song text from the *Bayoz* of Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov

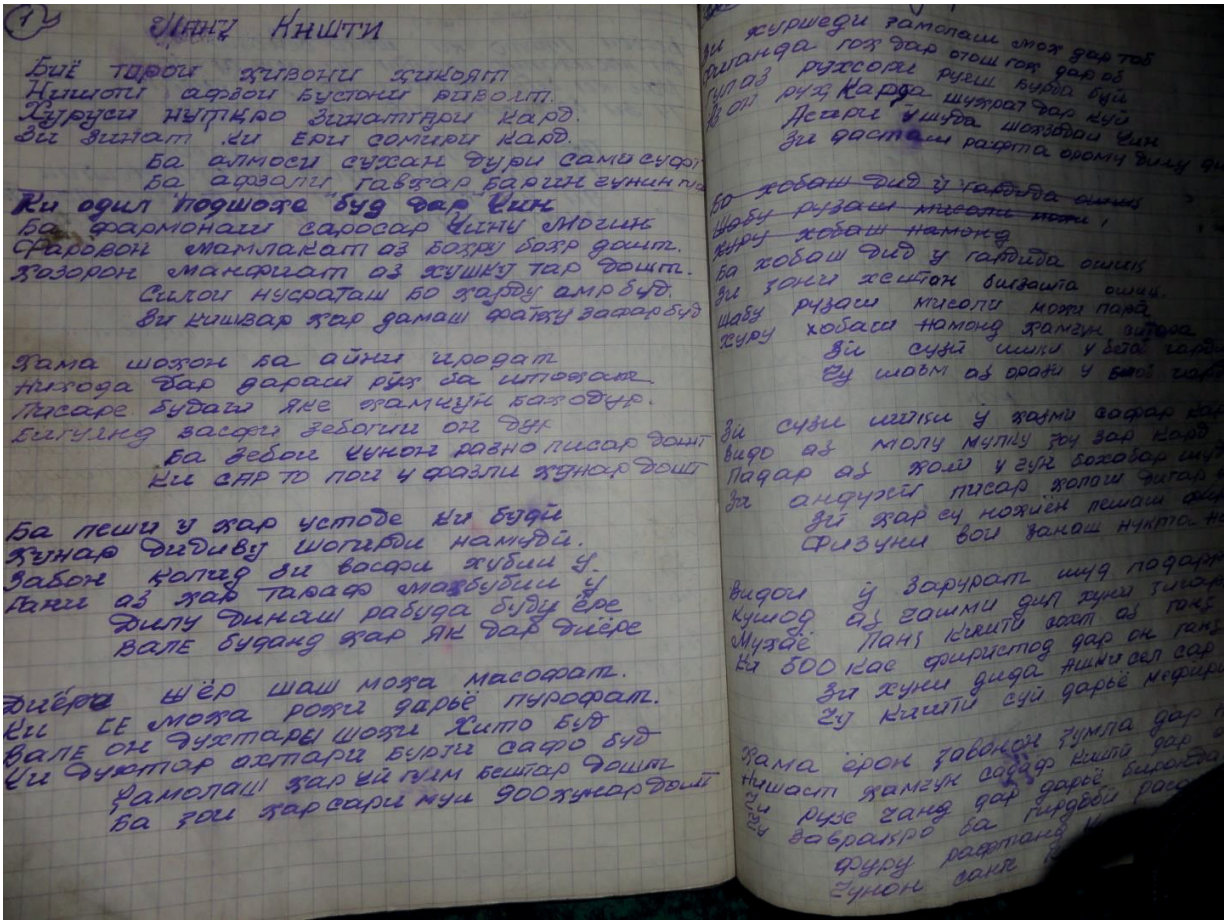

Figure 13: Song text of *Panj kishtī*, from the *Bayoz* of Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov, Shitkharv Village. Photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, November 2011.

Appendix L: A *rubob* hanging on the wall in the house of Azizkhon Karimov

Figure 14: The *rubob* hanging on the wall next to the image of Ali in the house of Azizkhon Karimov, Tughgoz village. Photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, November 2011.

Appendix M: Shodikhon playing the *daf*

Figure 15: Shodikhon playing the *daf* during *qasida-khonī* performance on stage, at the Académie Diplomatique Internationale in France. Photograph Kiril Kuzmin, 2015.

Appendix N: Abdulmamad Yormamadov making a future *rubob*

Figure 16: *Usto* (craftsman) Abdulmamad Yormamadov making a future *rubob* in his work shop, Langar Village, Wakhan. Photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, August 2014.

Appendix O: Murod Rashidbekov holding a *rubob*

Figure 17: Murod Rashidbekov, a relative of Zaimkhon Muborakqadamov holding the *rubob*. Photograph Muborakqadam Goibnazarov, Moscow, 2015.

Appendix P: *Khalifa* Mamadbek holding the *balandmaqom*, and Haidarmamad

Figure 18: *Khalifa* Mamadbek (left) holding the *balandmaqom* and Haidarmamad (right) explaining the symbolic meaning of the instrument. Yamg Village, Wakhan. Photograph Chorshanbe Goibnazarov, August 2014.

Appendix Q: *Rubobs* with national symbols

Figure 19: *Rubobs* with national symbols made by Masayn Masaynov, from Gharan Valley, Ishkashim. Photos were taken at the exhibition dedicated to the Day of Unity in Khorog. Photograph Vatani Alidodov, June 2014.

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